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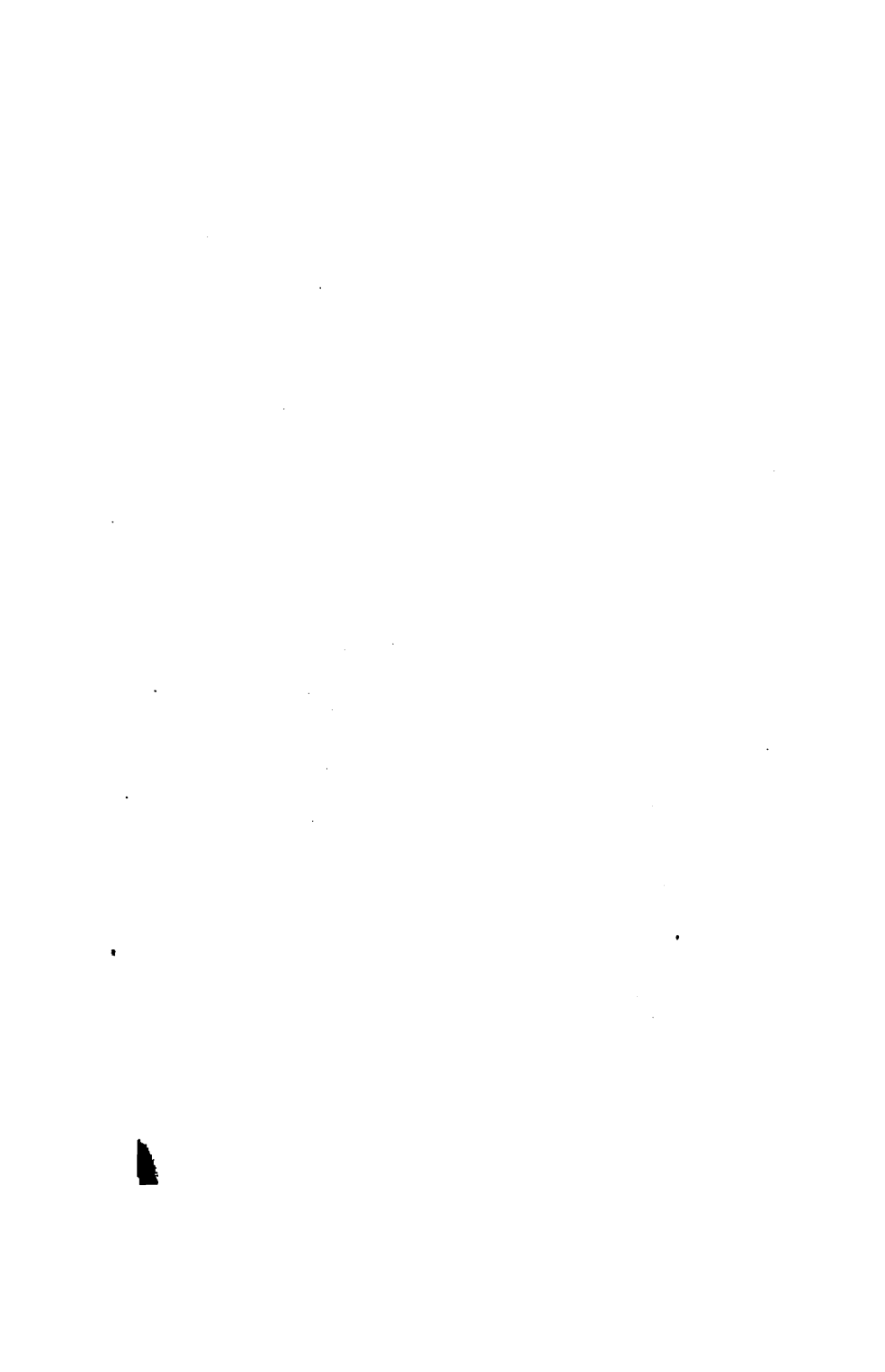


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OSBORNE OF ARROCHAR.
A MODERN ADAM AND EVE IN A GARDEN.
THE FORTUNES OF THE FARADAYS.
FOES OF HER HOUSEHOLD.
A WOMAN'S INHERITANCE.
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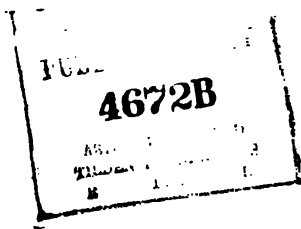
THE HEIRS
OF
BRADLEY HOUSE

BY

AMANDA M. DOUGLAS

AUTHOR OF "OSBORNE OF ARROCHAR" "HEROES OF THE CRUSADES"
"A MODERN ADAM AND EVE" "FORTUNES OF THE FARA-
DAYS" "FOES OF HER HOUSEHOLD" "CLAUDIA"
"STEPHEN DANE" "IN TRUST" ETC.

BOSTON MDCCCXCII
LEE AND SHEPARD PUBLISHERS
10 MILK STREET NEXT "THE OLD SOUTH MEETING HOUSE"



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THE HEIRS OF BRADLEY HOUSE

TYPOGRAPHY AND ELECTROTYPING BY
C. J. PETERS & SON, BOSTON.

S. J. PARKHILL & CO., PRINTERS, BOSTON.

TO

Francis Norwood Gobe

**“The man is the spirit he worked in; not what he did, but
what he became.”**

**NEWARK N.J.
July 1891**

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THE HEIRS OF BRADLEY HOUSE

CHAPTER I

IN THE AUTUMN

*So may a thousand actions once afoot,
End in one purpose.*

SHAKESPEARE.

It was a dreary day late in October. There had been some lowering and rainy weather after weeks of autumnal gorgeousness. The ground was covered with sodden leaves that but a brief while ago had made a sunshine in all the tints of gold, the rich shades of russet, and an intermingling of scarlet. The wind seemed to have blown out all its vigor, and merely wandered along in a slow, sullen fashion. All this was quite in keeping with the straggling concourse of people emerging from the old graveyard at Beverly. One side still kept its ancient name, while the newer and more pretentious part was dignified with the modern appellation, and prettily bordered into plots.

They left behind them two newly made graves in the far-away corner where several generations of Bradleys were taking their final rest. A few people who had come in their own carriages were driven slowly away.

Some of the nearest neighbors had walked. A little in advance were two people, — a rather portly, comfortable-looking woman, and a somewhat preoccupied man of medium size, with a slight stoop in his shoulders, and an unmistakably professional look.

The lady turned slightly, and gave a rather furtive glance to those behind her. No one was within hearing.

"I suppose, Mr. Sayre, old Mr. Bradley made a will? There are some members of the family left, though Beverly has quite lost sight of them."

"Really, I do not know. I have foreclosed several mortgages for him, and made some investments, but he never spoke of any disposition of his property. The day I was sent for it was too late, though he did try to tell me something. Old Mr. Paulin might have known, but he, too, is gone. Bradley was very close. You mentioned members of the family, — were there many? I have only heard of a sort of scapegrace nephew, who was here before my time, which, you know, only dates back ten years. And when a man lingers past ninety, he has outlived most of his friends. There is considerable property" —

"They have done nothing but save for the last fifty years. Well, yes; they have lived comfortably; they were not misers, by any means; but it has seemed to me that they might have hunted up the relatives, and shared a little with them. Perhaps they have, and I am unjustly censuring them." Her voice fell to a touch of regretfulness.

"Were there many relatives?" he asked with interest.

"There were six in the Bradley family. They were contemporary with my grandmother, really. Silas and Joanna were the eldest — I think Morton was next, and then three girls. My mother knew the younger girls. They all married and went away. The marriages were not very pleasing, I have heard. Morton married a Beverly girl. He died suddenly with a fever. The new part of the house was built for him. He was Joanna's idol. When young widow Bradley was about to be married again, they made her give up the child and all claim on the estate."

"And she?" interposed Mr. Sayre interrogatively.

"She died long ago, and her other children are married. That Mrs. Davis Osmun is one of them."

"This child, then, was the nephew?"

"Yes; the only Bradley among them. They sent him to college — they meant to make a great man of him; but he had some restless blood. The last time he was here he had

a handsome little boy. No one knew whether his wife was dead or alive. The girls came back a few times — there was no real quarrel: they just dropped apart as families do when they live at a distance. One of the girls was sent back here to be buried."

"I am glad to hear so much about them, Mrs. Vantine, and I should like to come in and see your mother. I will admit to you that so far we have found no indications of a will. Mr. Upham and myself will probably be appointed to take charge, and we shall at once proceed to hunt up the heirs."

Mrs. Vantine was at the corner of her street; Mr. Sayre was going back to his office. They exchanged good-bys, and he thanked her for her cordial proffer of any assistance she and her mother could give.

The small concourse had wended their ways in different directions, gossiping harmlessly or critically, for though the Bradleys had outlived their younger friends, and made no new ones, they had suddenly loomed into interest again. For the last ten days Beverly people had been stirred to an unwonted pitch of excitement. These old people had gone along, year by year, sowing and reaping, putting by money, interchanging the merest civilities with their neighbors, yet being curiously happy themselves. Silas Bradley was a just and honest man, paid his taxes promptly, and made no debts. Of late years there had been a farmer settled in a little cottage at the foot of the hill, a piece of land Mr. Bradley had bought to make his farm shapely at that corner. David Hardin confessed him a close master, but they got on very comfortably together. Mrs. Hardin looked after the dairy, and was paid well for doing her work well. Up at Bradley House, as it had come to be called, Miss Joanna attended to all needful work. They lived mostly in three rooms. Spring and fall a woman came for a week or two, to clean house, and wash up bedding; then matters went on as before.

All summer Miss Joanna had been fighting against the general breaking-up of physical nature. She was ninety-

one, and had never been seriously ill in her life. She had a firm belief that she should live a century, as one of her grandmothers had. A tall, straight woman, with the vigor and briskness we associate with middle life, and who could not entertain the idea of being laid up. So she made a grand fight in secret, until suddenly all the forces collapsed. Silas nursed her a few days, and Mrs. Hardin came in, but she had a family of young children. Then Mrs. Cosgrove was sent for, and the doctor.

"Joanna seems awful weak, and off her feed somehow," explained Mr. Bradley. "But she hasn't any fever, and she's never been sick. We two must have taken all the family strength," and he gave a slow little laugh that was touched with sadness.

Miss Joanna remained contentedly in bed, — a bad sign, Mrs. Cosgrove informed Mrs. Hardin. Silas began to feel nervous presently, and declared the doctor "wasn't doing her a mite o' good." One day she dropped into a comatose state, without realizing herself that the end was so near; indeed, still inwardly protesting against it.

When Silas Bradley found she had gone on her last journey without a word of farewell, he was stunned, chilled to a sort of mortal coldness.

"I don't want to see or know anything," he said tremulously. "You just 'tend to things, and give orders — you know enough sight more 'bout such things than I do. I want to sit here and think 'bout her and look at her. Why, it's just as if she was asleep, and I can't believe it any other way."

The neighbors were friendly enough now, but he did not want to see them. One brief interview was all he would grant the clergyman. He came home from the burial and went to bed, refusing Mrs. Cosgrove's kindly attention. The next day she found he had a stroke, a gradual paralysis of all the limbs, and then of speech. Once he rallied, and asked for Mr. Sayre. But whether it was that he wanted to make a will, or had one somewhere, the lawyer could not understand. For several days the vital forces *were held in suspension*, then the end came for him.

- Mr. Sayre had made a kind of partial search without finding any such document. There was a big, old-fashioned escritoire in his room, and there were papers and papers. It dawned upon him that Silas Bradley was a very rich man. But what his wishes in regard to his wealth were, at this eleventh hour, no one was ever to know.

Mr. Hardin drove his wife and Mrs. Cosgrove home. He was going over to the mill, so he halted at the cottage.

"I'll get out here," said she.

"And come in," rejoined Mrs. Hardin. "It'll be jest awful to go up to Bradley House, when them two dead people have been so lately carried out. Shut up the house, and come down here."

"The Hathorn girls promised to stay all night, and Mr. Sayre spoke of coming up this evening. Well, I'll come in and get warm. The air is dreadfully chilly, and graveyards are the worst of all places."

"I suppose Mr. Sayre will turn the house inside out to find that there will," said Mrs. Hardin as they walked into the cheerful sitting-room. "Hardin, he thinks there ain't none; but old Mr. Bradley was awful close, and as for Miss Joanna—well, she never talked of nothin' but jest the every-dayest sort of things. And if there's no will when they come to find the heirs, Hardin thinks they'll fight among themselves, and the place will be sold. Hardin hopes it will be divided, for he'd like to have all this north end. It's fine farming land, and in first-rate order, an' it stands to reason there ain't no farmers among the family; young folks don't take to farming nowadays. Mebbe though they'll find a will. But Hardin thinks the place is pretty sure to go in lots. What a sight o' money them old folks must have saved, for you see it's been all in-comes with them, and no out-goes, so to speak. Well, they should a-married, and had children and grandchildren of their own."

"If that nephew's alive, and he gets hold of it, he'll make things fly. Strange how people come by such queer streaks! *The Cumminses*, his mother's folks, were saving

and stiddy, but he was a kind o' black sheep. Miss Joanna thought a powerful sight of him, but it struck me as sing'lar she didn't say anything about him at the last. She was all taken up with gettin' well, and from the first day I come, I knew she wouldn't. I wonder how long people would go on if they were let to live!"

"We ain't any of us in any great hurry to die, I guess."

"Well, when I get to be ninety and past, I shall think I've done my sheer of this world's work, whether I've piled up any money or not. And if I haven't, it'll be a poor look to begin then."

The baby claimed Mrs. Hardin's attention. She gave her hat and coat and the gray blanket shawl to her eldest daughter to carry away.

"To be sure, to be sure!" she replied with a short laugh. "And such loads of things, and bedding—why, last summer she made a new pair of pillows. And I'll be bound there's money hidden away in odd corners and places."

"Sayre sealed up everything but dish closets," said Mrs. Cosgrove rather resentfully. "I'm sure I had enough to do without goin' round meddlin'. But some of that old house has been built on to nigh two hundred years. They've added rooms and furnichur, and no one to take the good of it!"

"Well, they couldn't take anything with 'em, that's alwers my satisfaction! You can have jest one suit o' clothes, an' your six feet of earth, and the rest you got to leave, so you might as well have taken the good of it."

"Well, they didn't pinch in their living. And I mean to be well paid for my work," nodding her head. "I'm good and warm now, so I'll tramp up the hill. I should want to be paid extry if I had much climbin' up and down to do. Though for that matter, you can hardly get in or out of Beverly without climbin' over hills."

A broad lane led up to the house, winding a little to *make the ascent less*. It was bordered by spruce and firs, *now so large and thick* you could hardly see anything

beyond. The house stood on a little plateau, and commanded not only a fine view of Beverly, but of the adjacent towns, or, rather, villages, and the river that wound its way along, dividing two States.

The house for all its age had not been allowed to go to decay. Part of it was of rough-hewn stone. Silas Bradley's grandfather had built the eastern end, a rambling one-story wing it looked now, with a peaked roof. His father had added a more pretentious part, two stories and with a wide porch. When Morton Bradley was married, the western wing was added, and this was of the same rough stone up one story, and then finished in timber, with a sort of tower at the end. Take it all in all it was rather picturesque.

Mrs. Cosgrove panted a little when she reached the top. She went around to the kitchen door, and on the stoop sat a woman muffled up to the eyes.

"O Marty! Why, you give me quite a shock! I wasn't thinking—and it seemed almost as if a ghost had crep' up, and was hidin' away. I'm glad you've come. I sort of hated to go in the house alone, and I'm not finicky either."

"Jane she wanted to stop at the Marshes', an' 'll be along soon. Well, I 'spose there wasn't much lamentin'! Queer not to have a relative of your own follow you to the grave! The Bradleys can't all have died out, though I don't remember there ever bein' but the Kent Bradleys belonging to this family, and they were gone ages ago."

Mrs. Cosgrove unlocked the door, and they entered a large apartment, generally called the "keepin'-room." The shutters were decorously bowed, but she threw them open. The sun had been struggling through the cheerless clouds, and now sent some pale yellow rays over the tree tops. It was a cheerful room in clear weather, for the house fronted rather southerly, and the sun looked in nearly all day. There was a large open space about the house, with clean *paths and flower-beds* despoiled of most of their *glory, but keeping the look of home interest, even if the*

hands that had tended them so untiringly would tend them no more.

The rag carpet had been swept to smoothness. The cooking-stove shone brightly, and diffused a cheering warmth. On one side of the kitchen was a large dresser with sliding doors of glass, the shelves filled with quaint crockery, china, and glass. A cane settle with great cushions, two high-backed rockers covered with faded red moreen, some old-fashioned splint-bottomed chairs, two reseatd with strips of list, a dining-table, and a kitchen-table scrubbed to snowy whiteness, on which stood a cedar pail bound about with brass hoops, while a cocoanut dipper hung just above.

When Mrs. Cosgrove had laid aside her wraps, she pushed the kettle over, and began preparations for tea. Jane Hathorn soon joined them, and they all kept up a steady stream of comments and speculations as to what would be done at Bradley House. Everybody began to recall reminiscences of the Bradley girls, handed down to some of them, to be sure. They toasted themselves in the warmth, they drank their tea, and declared it delicious, surprised to find anything but the cheapest. They enjoyed their cold chicken and boiled ham, and preserves of Miss Joanna's own putting up, and listened in surprise to the stores and stacks of articles.

"There'll have to be a vandue," said Miss Jane. "Fruit and vegetables and all such won't keep while they're hunting up the heirs. Strange that none of them have ever been heard on! 'Ceptin' Morton Bradley comin' back that time, there hasn't been a sign. And people do say if it comes to him, he'll soon make ducks and drakes of it."

They all helped clear away the tea things; then Miss Jane took out a ball of cotton and began to knit shells for a counterpane. Marty crocheted on a pair of slippers. Mrs. Cosgrove was less industrious, and sat rocking herself to and fro, until presently when Mr. Hardin came piloting up Mr. Sayre.

"I am very glad to find you all here, ladies," he said

after the friendly greeting. "I want to take possession of the papers, and to see about what there is in the house. I have been talking with Mrs. Vantine, who thinks there may be several heirs. Did you ever hear Mr. Bradley make any reference to a will, Mrs. Cosgrove?"

"Only on the day he sent for you. And his speech was so far gone one could not really make out" —

"If there isn't any will, what then?" inquired Miss Marty.

"The property will be divided equally among the heirs. And as there were four who married and had issue, it will not be difficult to arrange."

"I did hear that the Bradley girls signed away all right when they were married. Gracious! to think the youngest would be about eighty! What a long time ago!"

"Their signing or not would make no difference now. The only trouble will be to find them. I hope there will be some old letters to throw a little light on the subject. Shall we go now?"

They wrapped themselves in shawls and took two lamps. On the lower side of this large room was a kitchen and shed, on the other, two rooms that opened again on the hall to the south. They had been used as sleeping chambers by the old people. Everything was in perfect order. There was an old-fashioned, high-post bedstead, a bureau, a toilet table with a white valance around it, and a white quilted cover; and an old-time chest of drawers with a desk top. The most rigorous search failed to exhume anything but two small packages of letters. Then they passed to Mr. Bradley's room that had much the same furnishing, except the *escritoire*. This contained two tin cases, locked securely, and almost hidden in a back compartment, and several packages of papers. Mr. Sayre took possession of them all, and the keys that he found fitted them.

Then they made a tour of the rest of the house. Much of the furniture was merely standing about with no attempt at order. The floors were uncarpeted, but here and there were rolls fresh from the airing. Stacks of beds and

bedding with the quaint old scent of lavender and dried rose-leaves, bed and table linen, some in the very pieces in which they had been woven.

"There will have to be an inventory," he said with a grave half-smile, "and it will be no light task. But I have what I most need, and I will not trouble you farther. Are you likely to stay, Mrs. Cosgrove? I wish you could until something is decided upon."

"Why, yes — I would," hesitatingly.

"Well, I will be in to-morrow." Then he took up his budgets, fastened them securely together, and wished the ladies good-night.

Mr. Upham was waiting in his office for his *confrère*. They went carefully over the papers, but found not the slightest draft or suggestion of a will. There were some old family letters that had been written fifty years ago, others at irregular intervals from Morton Bradley, who must have been something of a rover.

Mr. Sayre made his promised call upon Mrs. Vantine the next afternoon. Mrs. Randolph, her mother, was a well-preserved, snowy-haired woman of seventy. It needed a long memory to reach back to the important point of the Bradley history with certainty.

Mary Bradley, he found, had married a man who held some position in a mill in Rhode Island. She had gone thither with her husband, and some years later been brought back for burial, leaving behind her one son. Catharine had married very much against her family's wishes; and Margaret, on a visit to her sister, had fallen in love with and married her husband's younger brother. Both sisters had come to Mary's funeral, Margaret remaining for quite a visit. Some years later they again visited Beverly, and each had several children. Margaret was going to a western city. She and Mrs. Randolph had been very friendly. The girls had received their share of the estate, and it was a generally accepted fact that Morton Bradley would be the heir to *the old place*, The Bradley House as it was called then, but *later on shorn of the article* and became simply Bradley House.

Morton had not come up to the high hopes entertained for him. He had fallen among a wild set at college, and it was rumored that more than once his uncle had debts to pay. He came and went. He wandered to California and tried his luck at mining. Then he rambled about, finally returning with a little boy. What happened no one ever knew, but in a fortnight he left again, and had not been seen since. There were no recent letters from him to tell whether he was dead or alive. But among them all there would no doubt be some heirs, grand-nieces or nephews. If any own nieces, there could be but Catharine. None of the Bradleys had been married very young.

Beverly had quite a sensation of its very own. Being the county town, it was not really lacking in excitements, but they were generally brought from other places. It missed Silas Bradley, too, the tall, slightly bowed figure, that even past ninety had a certain briskness. Yet it was true that the town had gone on and left him behind. He had not been especially interested in its advancement or prosperity. He had dropped into a groove and was simply an old landmark, an honest, upright man, but standing so aloof from his kind that the force of the example was lost.

Mr. Sayre began to advertise for the heirs. There was a handsome fortune to be divided among them. The inventory was taken and the feminine accumulations, the treasures of years of industry and carefulness, were surprising. That being done, Bradley House was shut up for the present.

The Hathorn girls — they were past forty, but everybody still called them that — were delighted to talk over the old silver, and stores of bedding and table linen, woven by Joanna Bradley on the old loom still up in the garret. However, there was no “vandue,” to the chagrin of the curious people, who were fain to inspect them. Hardin took charge of the stores and went on with the farm work, hoping sometime to be the gainer by his own shrewdness. *The winter was wearing away before any clew was found.*

CHAPTER II

A WINTER NIGHT'S ENTERTAINMENT

Happiness is a kind of energy. . . . It is not easy to energize constantly by one's self. — ARISTOTLE.

"It's cold as Iceland, Mousie! Stir up the fire, some of you who have the daring of a forlorn hope. We can't freeze, if we are all out of work. We have lived through more than two months of it, and March is coming in, the bitterest, blowiest, contrariest month of the year. I don't wonder it stirs up business: it is enough to stir up the interior of Africa! O girls, isn't summer lovely! We will never find fault again if we are baked, and broiled, and stewed. No coals to worry about, no extra garments — warmth and sunshine without money and without price. Oh, why don't we emigrate to Florida or somewhere? And to go on squeezing every penny and turning it over when you know you cannot add or multiply, but must subtract and divide and run down into fractions. Two more months and we can return to our useful but ill-flavored kerosene stove and fried steaks."

The last is uttered in such an exceedingly whimsical manner, that the tall, proud girl, sitting by the table, and the gentle mother with anxious lines in her face, smile in spite of themselves. As for Perdita, she always laughs at the slightest excuse.

Cynthia Halford shakes her head despondingly. It is full of short, soft curls of bronze gold, while her eyes are the long, dark, Oriental eyes with heavy lashes. Her complexion has a kind of gypsy brilliance, now that she takes walks for exercise, that does not correspond with either. *With such hair she should be a blonde; with such eyes, a*

creamy-tinted brunette. For the rest, her nose is small and impertinent, her forehead broad and low, her chin broad and dimpled, her mouth wide, but the lips set in such seductive curves, that it might prove dangerous to herself as well as others.

"Why not enjoy the broiled steak of to-day, and fret not about coming kerosene?" says Perdita.

"For one reason," says Cynthia with melancholy candor, "it is gone. You can remember some things and still delight in them. Music lingers in your brain, pictures paint themselves on your mind, flattering words haunt you with their pristine sweetness, but — subject for casuists — can you really enjoy a past good that you have eaten up?"

"Why, the Barmecide feast was one of remembrance."

"And hundreds of people must have them daily," says quiet Mrs. Halford. "The winter set in so early, and there has been such a dearth of employment."

"But they are not fattening, we must concede. It has been a horrid winter, with no real Christmas, or anything but heroic sacrifices, and they do *not* seem to ennoble us. I don't believe with Perdita's godfather, he must be that, for he invented the name, — that —

'Sweet are the uses of adversity.'

I should like to try the sweetness of prosperity. I am on the high-road to a profound disbelief in the doctrine that there is plenty of work for willing hands. There isn't work for half the people in such a winter as this. Industry is a very notable virtue, doubtless, when you have something to do."

"We still keep a little," interposes the mother in her soft voice, giving her pretty pink wool a soft twirl.

She and Regina are crocheting on babies' sacks. It is pretty work, but wretched pay. So many of the lighter employments are. A sudden sharp aspect of the labor question confronts Regina. It is — why the women who have homes and comparative comfort snatch even this *crumb from their poorer sisters!*

"This, alone, would give us one meal a day. And Regina said" —

Cynthia stops suddenly in confusion.

"You were in there to-day — did Mrs. Wickes?" — and the mother cannot, somehow, put it into words. She is very fond of the work. Their little store in the bank is growing low.

"You will have to know on Thursday, I suppose," Regina answers slowly. "Yes, the work is to stop for a while. There have been so many at it that the orders are all filled, and the stock begins to accumulate."

There is a sort of soft bitterness to her tone. For her mother's sake she keeps it from being hard. But she feels now, and she is not quite twenty, that they have all come to a desperate pass. Still, what are those people doing and enduring who have had no work for ever so long, and no money to fall back upon? Their little sum has tided them over several straits, but if there should come another hard winter, what then? For the present — well, work of some kind *must* stir up. People will be wanting gowns, though Easter is to fall very late, and the springs are always backward.

Regina Halford is tall and dignified, as you can see even in a sitting posture. She is slim and willowy, with dark hair and blue eyes, — a kind of purple blue, — a fair skin, rather pallid now, a straight, small nose, a softly rounded chin, and a proud, reticent mouth. For two years and a half she has worked in a dressmaking establishment. What it cost her to give up that last year at school and the hope of teaching afterward, no one knew, not even her dear mother. First there had been a shrinkage in some securities, then a long siege of typhoid fever for her mother, and a lighter one for Cynthia.

The place came to her in the manner we call providential. She was an exquisite machine-worker, and fashioned the family gowns with wonderful taste. A friend was to *be married*, and she bespoke a week's trial of Miss Halford *at Madame Lissner's*. Is there a fate that plays with our

lives and brings to us duties that we abhor? She, with her thirst for knowledge, her quick, retentive memory, her genius for arranging and classifying, and a curious economy of the intellectual powers. Everything she took up had a definite aim, and she attained it. Education was free, of course, and Regina would have gone with one meal a day to reach her goal. If some friend could have stretched out a helping hand; but their friends were not much richer than themselves. If these misfortunes had only waited a year! But she must take her place at once as the bread-winner of the family.

There was Perdita's little income that would barely suffice to board and clothe her until she was eighteen, that would not indeed have taken care of her among strangers. There was a hundred or two dollars where there had been nearly five. Of course they had always practised the severest economy, but Mrs. Halford had a way of making it smooth and pleasant. No rough edges had rasped these fatherless girls during her ten years of management.

But now the doctor said to Regina, —

"I do not want to alarm you unnecessarily, but your mother has barely escaped with her life. She has developed a good deal of irregularity of the heart, which at her time of life is seldom overcome. You must try to keep her from any mental anxiety as well as any physical overwork. She ought to have entire change of air and scene. Have you any relatives in the country where you could send her when the weather is a little more settled?"

"We have no relatives, I believe," said Regina sadly. "My father was an only child, and mother's people are mostly dead."

"Well, you had better send her away for a few weeks. It will pay you in the end."

They did not send her away, but they made a removal. The house was new, and above it were several vacant lots. The old-fashioned buildings opposite had grassy courtyards and a few straggling flowers; and what was best of all a magnificent wistaria climbing over the fronts. There were

not so many noisy children, and the general atmosphere was clearer, cleaner. They only had apartments, the fewest in number that they could manage with, and the rent was higher. When this offer came to Regina, it seemed the duty directly in her path. True, they might sell out their mother's small portion, at a great sacrifice, now, when it had dropped so low. With it she could remain in school, graduate, — but what if she did not find a position immediately? Then, too, salaries were low for beginners. It might be some time before she could attain to five hundred dollars a year.

She took her place in the stylish establishment, and gave immediate satisfaction. She was neat, exact; she had brains enough not to follow a crook in the basting; she could tell by her accurate eye whether anything was just right. There were other points on which she might have been of service, but she kept these to herself. She came to hate the whole business. It seemed so full of silly vanity and pretence. Women unveiled their weaknesses, and, what was infinitely worse, their meannesses, to their dressmaker. They scandalized their friends, and then went to meet them with a kiss. If they looked too stout or high shouldered or had not the grace of a sylph, the modiste was expected to remedy it all.

"If I fitted or draped, I should tell too many truths for the good of the business," confessed Regina at home.

At first she entertained them with amusing bits of description, that they should not suspect her own heart-break. She studied at odd times, for she cherished a hope of still achieving her desire. At all events, she did not mean to allow herself to drop down to the level of those girls who aped the grander attire in flimsy material, who flirted and danced, and were on the lookout for a chance at matrimony. Why was she so different from other girls, she used to wonder? Sometimes a half-sick consciousness came over her that the commonplace, easily *satisfied ones* had the best of it.

She had quite given up now all thoughts of returning to

that magical path. Cynthia took her place among the workers; she had no real ambition for the higher realms of knowledge. But in spite of the added income, they did not make much advance. Their rent was raised, — there was always something going higher. But just when Regina had settled herself to years of distasteful drudgery with a sort of heroic courage, she found there was a deeper depth. The House Cynthia had been with some ten months, where patent medicines, herbs, and various articles were put up, failed early in December. It was indeed a winter of failures. Everybody was discharging, contracting, lowering salaries and wages. The streets were thronged with unemployed people. But at Madame Lissner's it did not look as if there could be any retrenchment.

Suddenly the blow fell here. One day Madame Lissner dropped at the feet of a very exigent customer who was arrogant to the last degree. They took her up and carried her to her room. In a moment everything was confusion. A physician was summoned who pronounced it apoplexy, and before dawn of the next day there was no head to the establishment. A thriftless, dissolute husband rose from the background, sold the furniture and belongings, and the place was closed. It was useless to try for any new position at present. There were dozens of applicants for the one chance. They drew on the small amount they had been able to save up. Regina made infants' robes at starvation prices until that ended, and the crocheting they had at intervals all the year round. Mrs. Halford enjoyed the pretty work, and the sense of being busy gave her a certain cheerfulness. Perdita had helped with the housework. Her mother had been Mrs. Halford's dearest cousin: indeed, her aunt had been rather unfortunate in losing her children; only this one living to attain majority, and marrying rather late in life. At her death she had confided her little daughter to Mrs. Halford's care.

"Well, why shouldn't we have a Barmecide feast," says Perdita, *who has been poking the fire until the faint scarlet begins to brighten the plates of mica.* She sits on a has-

sock in front of the iron god of heat who has to have offerings made him continually, or he sulks. She is a year or so younger than Cynthia, and less striking than either of the others. A "nut browne mayde," truly, with eyes and hair much the same shade, and a complexion sun-kissed rather than olive, relieved by the brightest of cherry lips.

"Of remembrance or hope?" asks Cynthia. "The things past are not sufficiently beguiling to linger over. The things to come — I wish there was some intermediate world, some planet devoted to the equalization of all things, where one could enjoy the delights one has longed for and missed in this — Oh, that is horrible heterodox, isn't it?"

"The wildly romantic, the improbable that might happen in some enchanted realm," interposes Perdita laughingly. "For instance — I'd like to be a prima donna to whom people listen entranced, who is loaded with flowers and gifts, who has lovers by the score at her feet, and on whom fortune pours out her richest showers."

Then Perdita springs up, pirouettes round the room, and it is a mystery that she can find any vacant spaces; but she has the litheness of a cat. She pauses, and hugs the breath almost out of her placid auntie, kisses the soft lips, and settles herself again upon the hassock with charming demureness.

They are quite used to these outbreaks. Mrs. Halford gathers up her dainty wools, smooths out her thread, and simply says "You ridiculous child!" She has a misgiving that it is her duty to preach a little sermon, but somehow she has not the gift of preaching.

"There is one thing you could achieve, Dit," says Cynthia: "the *rôle* of a variety actress."

"Oh, unkindest cut of all!" laughs Perdita. "Still, there are degrees. I have heard of a lover who, when he could not have the rose, cut off the thorn and saved it, and another who wished he were the wrapping of the bouquet his lady love carried, because it had touched her *hand*. No doubt both instances won a reward."

"O Perdita, you never would!" cries Mrs. Halford

aghast, who has been all this time considering Cynthia's remark.

"I'm afraid I couldn't, Cynthia to the contrary; I haven't a bit of — what shall I call it — panoply to join the fray;" and she laughs. "I might be tragic, but I couldn't be ridiculous to audiences. In the bosom of one's family it is different. And now, Cynthia, you must tell your wildest dream. I have let you all laugh at me."

"To have a magnificent lover," says Cynthia solemnly. "Rich and handsome and noble and generous, and if there is any other virtue under the sun, pray Heaven to send it to him and him to me."

Perdita is quite amazed.

"The most improbable thing, you said; — and now it is Regina's turn," continues Cynthia gravely.

"To be rich."

"And then what would you do?"

"Spend it," briefly.

"O Re," cries Perdita, "you make it too bare and cold! You want a lovely home where you can be a gracious queen; you want to gather about you distinguished people as they did in the old salons, as they do now at some of the receptions, the high-up ones of artists and poets and people who have travelled and can talk beautifully. And if you could have gone on at school and been rich enough to enter a college and become a famous woman" —

"You forget the genius, the capabilities necessary for such a career;" and her face flushes with a pitiful wavering touch that is barely pink. For she feels to-night as if she hardly had talent enough to earn an ordinary living.

There is a silence that touches all of them. It is bitterly hard to have your life wrenched out of the place where you feel you could do your best work. Even the gentle little mother has a curious misgiving that matters have gone in a wrong channel.

"You have genius. You would have succeeded," says Cynthia decisively.

She seems farther off than ever to-night.

"Your Barmecide feast, mentally considered, is rather a failure," she says almost crossly to Perdita. "It is always so when one builds air-castles."

What shall the mother say? It seems almost as if her sweet faith had deserted her in this her hour of need. "All Thy waves and storms have gone over me," said the psalmist. She feels as if they had drifted her from her moorings.

"My dear girls, do not be so faithless. It is a hard and anxious time, but God, I am sure, will open some door to us. Let us trust him."

They have none of them attained to their mother's faith — perhaps that is impossible to sorely tried youth, working out its own salvation. They have been heroic, self-denying, industrious; they have given up the real enjoyments of years that should be sweetest, and they are bright and pretty, each one with her own charm. Is life harder than in her youth? Do trials come too early?

Regina shuts her lips with a certain firmness that makes them hard. There *is* a door — whether of Providence or not — how can one tell? She thinks gloomily. She has never had a lover, a real lover from the depths of her own heart's election. But there is a young man who calls occasionally, whom she sees at the house of a friend where he is boarding, and whom she feels in her inmost soul her friend has allotted to her. He is a foreman of one department of a large machine shop, earns good wages, and is highly spoken of, is steady, well-looking, by no means deficient in general knowledge. With the delicate intuition of a woman's soul she knows he is standing at the outer gate, and will not advance a step until she makes some sign. She honors him for that delicacy. Yet he is not the man with whom she would elect to spend her life. But the prospect of a home of her own looks restful and enticing in this turmoil of soul. Her mother grows more fragile, she needs more in the way of comforts, and, in *spite of theorist*, the real comforts of life cost a great deal. *The girls would have a more genial atmosphere in which*

to expand, — they might reach up to that high womanhood she seems fated not to attain. Would she find her reward in the self-abnegation that looks almost heroic to her?

"Well," says Perdita presently, "there is my money. If the worst comes, can we not use that?"

"You dear child," responds Mrs. Halford.

It is a wonderful fortune, this two thousand dollars of Perdita's, so invested that it pays ten per cent, which is made to board and clothe her. Yet she builds many Spanish castles out of it, for there in that magical country there are no taxes. It has taken her to Europe, up the Nile, to far India, where "every prospect pleases;" it has bought gowns and jewels and pictures and luxuries of all kinds, but she lays it cheerfully now on the family altar. The sacrifice touches Regina, who has laughed a little over these day dreams. Can she not give up hers also? To know, to take part in the wonderful things in the world, to be surrounded by intellectual and artistic influences — the appeals to the mind instead of the senses? Yes, she will do it. It is only to glance up with a smile, to meet the asking look in the slow moving eyes. Then the uncertainty of their future will have no more anxiety for her.

A step comes stumbling up the stairs and she colors guiltily as if she might be put to the test the next instant. But there is another family on this very floor, and *he* would not come without an invitation.

The knock is at their door. Perdita flies up and opens it. A man stands there and Regina, seeing the figure, comes haughtily forward, her face in its coldest lines. He is not young nor familiar looking.

"I wish to find a Mrs. Halford" — hesitatingly.

"Yes," answers Regina, standing between her mother and possible harm.

"I wish to see her. It is of the utmost importance."

There is a certain authority in the tone. They cannot be warned out of the house: their next month's rent is lying in the drawer. They owe no debts.

"Of the utmost importance," he repeats. "Is she in?"

Mrs. Halford rises and takes a few steps forward. The man walks in with the air of having business that is not to be lightly dismissed. The small fair gentlewoman glances at him rather blankly. There may be some distant cousins that she has never seen. Perdita shuts the door to keep out the cold. There is a momentary confusion, then Regina places a chair for the stranger and goes back to her seat in a dignified manner. The cheerful fire sheds its light around on the rather worn Brussels carpet, the inexpensive window draperies, and the picturesque group. On a small table stands a spice pink that perfumes the air. In one corner a bookcase evolved from packing-boxes and covered with some soft-tinted cretonne.

The stranger draws his chair nearer the stove.

"How warm and cheerful you look! It is a bitter cold night. Are these your daughters, madam?"

Mrs. Halford starts perceptibly, being thus addressed. She picks up her work, then lays it down again in her lap with a nervous tremor.

"Yes," she answers with a faint inflection.

Regina glances up, quite certain of impending misfortune. There is a little secret that Perdita does not know, need not ever know; but the blow will fall here, and wring her mother's heart.

"I ought to apologize for this late call, but I have been some time hunting you up. I hope I have not disturbed you," remarking the elder girl's rather questioning glance. "I have come on a matter of business, and wish to verify some important points. Have you any family records? And what was your maiden name?"

"It was Weir."

"Could you remember — well, it must have been your mother, of course" — and he looks at the girls with uncertainty, as if he was getting a little mixed. "Yes, can you recall your mother's maiden name?"

"It was Catharine Bradley. She came from the town of *Beverly* in a neighboring State. I remember visiting my *aunt and uncle* there when I was a little girl. I dare say

they are dead. They were quite elderly people then." She sighs softly. "They were the eldest of six children, and the others went years ago."

"Exactly!" A gleam of satisfaction lights up the somewhat keen face, and he nods once or twice. "Now, have you any papers, any marriage record — and your own birth" —

"I have mother's family Bible and her own certificate. And our records were put in it."

"You had two aunts. Do you know anything about them?"

"My Aunt Margaret married my father's brother. The older aunt married and died in a distant State."

"And they both left issue?" The question is asked in a dry, business fashion.

"Yes."

"Do you know anything about them?"

My Aunt Margaret left one granddaughter," she says in a slow tone, a sudden fear thrilling through her nerves.

"Do you know where she is?"

Perdita is listening wide-eyed. Regina, watching her mother, turns pale and cold.

"Why must you know?" the lady falters.

"Will you let me look at your family records?"

Cynthia is nearest the old family Bible that is a sort of heirloom to them, and fetches it.

Its perusal seems satisfactory. The stranger nods complacently to himself.

"Did you ever know Morton Bradley?" he asks.

"No," Mrs. Halford returns; "though he would be my cousin, if he were alive."

"And the Winterburnes — Mary Bradley married a Winterburne."

"I do not know anything of them."

"I suppose you remember Beverly and your uncle's house. What was it like?"

"I was *only a little girl*. The house stood on a hill, and *you could see all about*." Then she recalls fragments, a

bit here and there, which seems extremely satisfactory to the listener.

"Ah," smilingly. "I think you are the very people I have been searching for, three months or more, and I am glad to have found you. Talk of the needle in a haystack — but I believe *that* search is useless, while mine *has* been successful. And now I must explain to you that your old uncle, Silas Bradley, and your aunt, Joanna Bradley, died last October. They have left a large estate. There is no will, at least none has been found, which is presumptive evidence. The law takes its course, and, as there can be but four direct heirs, each one comes in for one-quarter of the fortune — a handsome sum. I have been appointed administrator. I have advertised everywhere for the heirs, and a mere accident put me on this track. Well, I am thankful for my good fortune. Allow me to congratulate you, Mrs. Halford;" and he stretches out his hand from which he has pulled the glove.

"Then it was not" — she looks strangely at Perdita and draws a long breath of relief. "This is my cousin's child," and she reaches out to the little brown girl. "She was given to me by her mother at her death."

"And fell into good hands." Then he studies them all with a curious, dry smile.

They are quiet from sheer amazement and a kind of incredulity born of the utter unexpectedness. Their mother has never spoken of any fortune likely to fall to them. Regina inspects the stranger furtively, yet why should he attempt to deceive them unless it was some plan to extort money? If he should ask for that —

"Dead," Mrs. Halford says presently in a half-pitying, retrospective tone. "They must have been very old people. I hope there was some one or something to comfort their declining years."

"They were hale and hearty to the last. We must all go sometime." Yet he wonders they did not gather their *few relatives* around them and take solace in the *relationship*. "And now I trust that I am pardoned for my

unseasonable call. I shall want to repeat it to-morrow morning and verify some particulars."

As Mrs. Halford answers, it occurs to her that they have all been remiss in gratitude, yet her mind is instantly confused as to whether one ought not to be sorry when any human being goes to that great unknown; whether one ought to rejoice in the mere fact of money.

"We are all obliged for your trouble," she rejoins.

Mr. Sayre smiles as he bids them good-night, and is touched by their simplicity.

CHAPTER III

THE GIFT OF THE GODS

If goodness were always quite simple, what would be more delightful than to be good always? — HEYSE.

THEY still stare at each other when he has gone. Then Cynthia breaks into a merry laugh.

"Of all people I ever heard, we take a fortune in the coolest manner! Why, we are almost unthankful when we are snatched from the very depths! Think how we were bewailing our lot an hour or so ago!"

Regina comes around and softly places her hand on Mrs. Halford's shoulder.

"Mother, *do* you think it can be true? I have a curious presentiment" —

"Nonsense!" cries Cynthia impatiently. "Of course it is true. You see, mother and Aunt Margaret always supposed the estate would go to this nephew, the only descendant of the name. Perhaps he too is dead. There are not a great many of us in this third generation, after all. And why should there be any deception?"

Regina has no good reason. Her doubt is on general principles. When one has had disappointments that have cut to the heart's core, one cannot believe so readily. Perhaps, too, because she sees how this fortune can help her to attain to her heart's desire, she is the more doubtful and afraid.

"And we can have a real feast," declares Perdita. "No Barmecide for us now! O Auntie, if we could go back to Christmas, and keep it in the grand old house!" Perdita's *brown eyes glow with delight*. "For I suppose it *is* a *beautiful old place*, since it is a hundred or two years old!"

A fine pride suffuses Regina's face. She has heard so much stress laid on ancestry among some of Madame Lissner's customers that she feels as if she had entered an enchanted circle.

"I don't know," replies Mrs. Halford dubiously. "It seemed a very gloomy house when I was a little girl. My delight was to go out of doors and look down on the beautiful sights, the pretty villages, the river, the ledge of rocky heights over opposite, and there were such wonderful flowers growing all about in the fields. I was free to gather them, but Aunt Joanna would not have her garden despoiled."

"Well, we will make the house beautiful when we get there," declares Cynthia. "Regina may be safely trusted for that. And I shall study up on house decoration. I believe I should like to be an architect, if I could plan country houses with plenty of ground around them, though I must confess my ideas are mostly taken from novels. Yet there must be a great many pretty places in the world;" and she sighs. "We are like the Frenchman who took a journey around his room. Our experiences of travel are rather circumscribed."

"You forget," interposes Mrs. Halford, "that the estate must be divided into four parts, and the house"—

"The heirs will have to cast lots for that."

Regina remembers that their visitor said "a large estate." Of course it would naturally increase in value.

"Regina," says the mother, "take a lamp and look in that old brown trunk for the Japanese box. That has all my old letters—your grandmother's and some from your great-aunts. It is fortunate that I kept them. Some of them will help to establish our claim, if there is any difficulty."

She is quite excited now, and a pretty pink has blossomed in her cheeks.

Cynthia goes with her sister. There are two dark rooms between *this and the* living room proper. One is small and used for storage, and the hooks high on one side are a

refuge for the gowns not in general wearing. They take down boxes and bundles and finally reach the trunk, exhuming the queer old lacquer box with its tarnished gilt figures.

It has treasures indeed: locks of hair tied with faded ribbons; flowers from graves, pressed and mounted on cards; a miniature of Perdita's mother painted on ivory, some rings and a brooch or two; Grandfather Weir's old silver watch that has a London date of early in 1700; various other mementos, and some bundles of letters, not a great many, from the elder people, and rather brief, but quite to the point, if needed in establishing family history. Seventy years and more in age, some of them so tender the thick coarse paper cracks and crumbles. It is a long time since they have been disturbed.

The clock strikes midnight to their great surprise, so engrossed have they been with their treasure trove. The fire has dropped down again, and Perdita stirs it up, goes for coals, and there is a general preparation for retiring.

"Let us be good and hot for once," says Cynthia. "If our fortune is not very great, it may at least allow us an extra ton of coals. Girls, think of having a big house heated from top to bottom"—

"From bottom to top," interrupts Perdita. "We shall have a furnace. I shall not be like that foolish woman with her yard of black pudding, nor Handy Andy, who wanted a 'goould watch,' but I shall wish for an immense furnace at the bottom of the house, and grates. And in the fireplaces we shall burn cedar logs. O mamsie, think of it!" and she hugs Mrs. Halford rapturously.

The stove is all alight now, and they open the door to the adjoining hall room. The middle one gets a good deal of warmth through the *portière*. It is rather close crowding, but all their income will afford. Regina shares her mother's room until warm weather, when she takes to the sofa. The kitchen beyond has two windows opening on a *roomy air shaft*, and in the depth of the house there is *a similar apartment*. All these tenants are nice, respectable, middle-class people.

Mrs. Halford is nervous and wakeful. Regina does not sleep, but revels in a strange world of delight. She can spare these hours : there is no need for early rising, — so that Perdita gets to school in time ; for the others can do their work even in the short days.

Mr. Sayre is there by ten o'clock the next morning. After he has given the papers an exhaustive perusal, and is certain they would win any case, he is quite communicative. The farm is valuable as farms go ; just now, for a year or so, there has been a depression in real estate, but there will be no need of hurrying the sale of that. There is a great deal of valuable timber, and some very fine stock. But the principal part of the fortune is in mortgages, stocks, government bonds, and there is a tract of land supposed to be rich in iron in a neighboring township. Altogether it is a hundred and forty or fifty thousand dollars.

"Oh, you must be mistaken !" cries Mrs. Halford.

"My dear madam, the papers are now in my safe. My partner and I have gone over them minutely. Remember they represent the savings of half a century or more. Silas Bradley was a shrewd manager. Beverly people did not imagine him quite so fore-handed. He was a remarkable man to keep his prudence and his good judgment to that great age. But money makes money, and when you have only to let it roll over and over, why, it isn't work for hard thinking. He bought early government bonds when most men were standing off. How it happens that he did not make a will puzzles me. And what occurred between him and his nephew no one can even guess. They were wonderfully close-mouthed people. But Morton Bradley was a spendthrift, if accounts are correct. From one letter I have found I should think he contemplated going to China. Did you ever hear?"—

Mrs. Halford had not. The other relatives had so settled to the fact of Morton's heirship, and there being but the two women after Mary's death who clung together. *Both marriages had been displeasing. They had never met*

with cordial overtures of intimacy after that. The Winterburnes had dropped out of mind as well, Mr. Winterburne having married again. Mary had left one son, Mrs. Halford remembered. Indeed, some of the old letters proved that. If he died without heirs the share would revert to the family.

Regina is dividing up the fortune in its four shares. She does not grudge any one his or her portion. She is so thankful to know of a certainty that there is something between them and want, beside the thirty dollars in the bank and her mother's poor little portion. When she recalls her efforts of the last ten weeks to find employment, she shudders and gives thanks that she will not need to go through the ordeal again. Not heroic, of course. But Regina Halford at this period of her life has but one desire and that is not manual labor.

And now she can put away that haunting thought of marriage. She has no coquetry in her nature. What she might do if some of her ideals stood in the flesh she does not ask herself. She has not been thinking of marriage. Among poor girls it seems mostly a question of bettering one's condition, or, at least, changing the base of daily toil, having the one life-long master and a steady position. She has not an exalted opinion of matrimony under ordinary circumstances, and this young man is not her ideal. In her security against present and perhaps future want she can choose her own duties and pleasures, — be free ! oh, blissful thought ! Prisoners of poverty — who was it said that ! Ah, she knew how hard a jailer comparative poverty could be !

The elders have been discussing business. There are no debts, and, though a full year is allowed before any settlement, there is no real need of delay. The division of the personal property can begin. "It seems a shame for Bradley House to stand idle," Mr. Sayre said ; "but it would be difficult to get the right kind of a tenant. Now, if you had a son ! I suppose you would hardly care to come and live there ? Mr. Hardin will lease the farm for a year ?"

Regina hears that, and it rouses her from her reverie.

"Why, if we *could* come;" then she glances at her mother.

"You see, you have two shares, — that is, you and your niece. You will be needed in Beverly to prove your claim. And the summer will be very pleasant."

Regina's heart gives a great bound. To go quite away, to begin a new life hampered by no distasteful reminders! She glances eagerly at her mother.

"I must be the son," she says, smiling to both of them in a grave, self-reliant manner.

"But you wouldn't want to farm, though women do sometimes, and their common-sense has saved more than one shiftless man from ruin. Still, if you *would* come and live in the house until matters were settled — really, now, why couldn't you and your mother accompany me to Beverly? I must take the train at three. Mrs. Sayre will give you a hearty welcome until you are better provided for."

"I should not dare risk a journey just now," Mrs. Halford says rather timidly. "I have hardly been out all winter. But when it is a little pleasanter — and if it is necessary you and Cynthia might go" — then she pauses as she turns to Regina with some dim misgivings of propriety.

Mr. Sayre has a fancy that it will stamp his search with a more evident halo of success if he returns with some of the lost heirs. He likes the appearance of this tall self-possessed girl. And they might elect to keep Bradley House as part of their share. It would be a pity for it to go out of the family.

Regina is the reliant product of necessity. She knows there are prosperous and tenderly nurtured young women who do not even go to their dressmaker's without a chaperon, but she has had her own way to make and has courage and common-sense. After a little discussion it is decided that they will be ready when Mr. Sayre calls for them, and go to view their promised land. Perdita need not attend school for a few days.

Cynthia has been busy in the kitchen department and

only made forays to the parlor. She is delighted, of course. But the very magnitude of their fortune appalls them! Ten thousand dollars, now, would seem reasonable.

"Perdita will be an heiress," declares Cynthia. "Our share is mother's while she lives, and she is a long way from ninety. Perhaps Beverly is famous for longevity. Do you know, I feel quite as if I were in a dream."

And it is like a dream, to start out this afternoon with their satchels and an escort, and go they hardly know whither. There are a street-car ride, a ferry to cross, a confusion of places and voices, and the comfortable feeling of being settled in safety. Then they are off on their wonderful journey, the longest one they have ever taken. For though roads lead from New York to everywhere, poor people stay largely at home, unless they are the recipients of benevolence.

Mr. Sayre sits in the seat in front of them. He has provided them with illustrated papers, and now turns his attention to some legal matters quite as important as theirs. They watch their fellow-passengers with interest; they glance out of the window. The winter landscape is not altogether exhilarating; but the towns and villages, the rivers and desolate places, seem to wind by like a panorama. There are sylvan nests half hidden by sentinel evergreens, and tall trees stretching out bare, defiant arms. They pass the great chimneys of a rolling-mill and smelting-furnace. The towns are farther apart, the farms and woodlands fill longer reaches. There are hills, then respectable mountains, there are snow and ice-bound rivers. The sun is playing at hide-and-seek behind them, but a wind in the road brings him to light. He has disappeared when the travellers reach their destination, but he has left behind such a cloud of glory as their eyes have seldom seen.

Here is the pretty old town, girt about by hills on three sides, and the river flowing at the fourth. Regina draws a long breath, — there is so much room everywhere, such a sense of boundless, exultant freedom! Wide streets, *houses far apart* set in the midst of what would be bloom-

ing gardens in the summer. Cleanliness that startles her. No groups of street gamins, no hurrying nor jostling. They make a turn out of this place of storehouses, enter a broad street, and come out to a beautiful Park. True, Regina looks at it with the eye of summer faith. There are churches rearing tall spires; in the distance is an imposing Court-house.

Mr. Sayre makes another turn, past the corner, and unlatches the gate. A pretty, well-lighted house looms up before them. Opening the door with his latch-key he ushers them into a spacious hall, where a middle-aged lady with a grave, sweet face comes to welcome them.

"You see, this time I was in luck. I brought these lost heirs along as a sample, to prove that my search had not been futile," he announces gayly.

Mrs. Sayre takes a hand of each, and leads them in what seems an immense parlor, where you need not run against chairs, or overturn tables. There is a fragrance as of flowers in the air, a delightful warmth all about.

"I am glad you have come," Mrs. Sayre says, quite as if she were welcoming old friends. "We Beverly people have been so exercised over the Bradley heirs. Mr. Sayre has run hither and thither, and telegraphed, and had some queer experiences. There were claimants, to be sure, and no end of Bradleys, but there was always a missing link somewhere. Did you get tired of the long ride? A little later, in May and June, or in October, it is magnificent. Will you come up-stairs to your room now?"

The girls rise and follow her, protesting that they are not tired, how could they be, when everything is so fresh and delightful! But it is a comfort to emerge from cloak and hat, to pull out crushes and wrinkles, to bathe one's face, and brush one's hair, and admit to each other in whispers that their hostess is delightful, and does not seem at all like a stranger. Then the bell summons them to supper, which is rather a "high tea." Mrs. Sayre is pleasantly chatty. *Of course, the Bradley affairs are uppermost, and already they find themselves important authority.* Regina

begins to feel the dignity of a long line of ancestors. Cynthia is bright and amusing.

There are several callers in the evening, among them Mrs. Vantine. Mr. Upham had announced Mr. Sayre's success, but the two young girls are quite a surprise. She is eager to hear about Margaret Bradley's granddaughter, and recalls their own grandmother.

"I declare," cries Cynthia as they are settling for the night, "I hardly know if I be I, all is so queer. How many things have happened in twenty-four hours, to shake one's firm hold on reason! And we've no little dog at home—we were too poor yesterday to keep one, and now we could indulge in a dozen."

"We are not so very rich," Regina adds gravely.

"Perdita's the lucky one. But she is just like a sister to us, and would give one her eyes in case of need."

"Let us hope there will never be any real need again," is the almost solemn response. For having tasted even this faint sweetness of prosperity, she shivers at the idea of poverty. All the golden maxims and old adages crowd to her memory like a throng of satirists. She ought not to be elated, but she is; she ought not to be so unheroic as to desire wealth and ease; she ought to find some divine compensations in a life of toil and self-denial, but she does not, she never has. From whence springs this feeling of appreciation, of keen, subtle enjoyment, these thrills of delight at the change? If it is weak and foolish, why did God create within her the love and longing for refined surroundings, for culture, for companionship with higher minds? It is not simply a desire for show or fashion, it is no concession to mere personal vanity, but a deep, ingrained love for the best there is in life. The little floating items of women who are doing a grand work in the world, the reunions of art and genius, the discussion of the larger problems of life, the higher truths, have always stirred and excited her. Somehow she cannot despise herself for it. *She cannot help giving thanks that she has left the irritating, uncomfortable life behind.* Is it wrong to be grateful

for money? Does it look horribly mercenary in God's pure eyes, she wonders? For she has not as yet begun to question the existence of a Supreme Being, in the fashion of flippant philosophies. But did not the apostle say, "In everything give thanks."

The lovely warm room in its silence is like an enchanted country. She seems just in reach of the verities of her true life. That old shell of dissatisfaction was merely the burr. There dawn splendid possibilities, intangible as the commingling of the soft glowing tints at morn, that float and transfuse, until out of the wonderful veil comes the sun. She will do something. Not teach school now, but teach in another way perhaps. She remembers with tender gratefulness Perdita's insistent claim of genius for her, and smiles.

When the bell rings, she has a rather weary feeling of effort, of having tried to go to sleep instead of sleeping. Cynthia is fresh as a rose, and full of comments in which folly and wisdom might struggle for supremacy.

"Cynthia," says the elder gravely, "we have turned a corner in our lives. To be unduly elated over a little money stamps one as a parvenue at once. We have our good old birth; we can take rank with that. What is past, the last two years I mean," she colors a little, and bends over her satchel with a feeling that this borders on snobishness, "was one of the accidents that might happen to any one — a reverse of fortune, and is no one's affair. But for that I should have gone on with my education. I mean to take it up again." She is on firmer ground here. "And you are sometimes so — so incautious."

Cynthia stares a little, and seems to revolve a tangle in her mind.

"Well," with a decisive nod, "I suppose it wouldn't redound specially to one's credit to have put up drugs and herbs and potions in a stuffy back room, or" —

"What I mean is that we need not enter into minute explanations," says Regina almost crossly, and with a *sense of shame*. Then she goes down-stairs with a *magnificent color and a proud step*.

The breakfast is like a pretty picture. Mrs. Sayre has a dainty bit of lace on her wavy gray hair, and a silken gown with laces at the wrist. She pours coffee with an exquisite deftness; she has the little touches that familiarity with the usages of society brings, the manner that has grown to be an every-day habit. Regina is careful as well, and she has an intuitive delicacy. If Cynthia is not so finished, her amusing brightness makes amends.

It is a fine spring morning, much warmer than it was yesterday. The air seems full of the resinous fragrance of pine and spruce and hemlock. True, there are patches of snow here and there, and patches of grass that have a hazy green struggling with the brown. You can feel the stir of the coming life.

"I shall be very busy this morning," announces their host. "Mrs. Sayre will take you out driving and show you Beverly, and this afternoon we will go up to Bradley House. I will telegraph to your mother that you are safe and well."

"Thank you," returns Regina with a smile.

Beverly is a beautiful old town, certainly. After droning and dozing away a hundred or so years, a railroad galvanized it into new life. Not without much protest on the part of those who had come for retired and rather exclusive homes. But the railroad only skirted one side, and the business was confined strictly to those limits. There were some wide, straight, well-kept, well-shaded streets, with fine old houses and ample grounds. Families from some of the southerly cities had summer houses. Lawyers abounded since it was the county town. Most of its inhabitants were people of means, leisure, and refinement. The beautiful, spacious park was quite a resort on summer afternoons. Residences and churches were grouped about it.

As one went a little farther from the centre the grounds grew larger. There were graperies and greenhouses, miniature lakes, and a pretty stream known as Little River meandered around, adding a certain picturesqueness, until it joined the greater body of water. Blue, misty hills rose

in the distance, framing in the outlying farms. Some dozen miles away there was a great summer resort, filled at every step with Indian legends. Near by there was another in which the townspeople had greater interest.

A curious winding road led up to a level that perched itself on the top of three hills, mountains by courtesy. The curiosity of the place was a wonderful lake nestling in a hollow, fed no one knew how, and reported fathomless in one particular part. Years ago some enthusiast had built a sanitarium. It was high, with a deliciously dry air, splendid water, shade enough for comfort, and an atmosphere that was perfection. The old Indian name was thrown over, and circulars went abroad with glowing descriptions of Mount Sardis. The sanitarium failed, but hotels took its place, and it became a great favorite with quiet, staid people with Quaker proclivities. They came for all summer, brought their books and their work, their horses and carriages, their maids and men; and, as it sometimes flowed over, Beverly reaped the benefit. The adjacent farmers found it an excellent market.

While there were walks all about of the wildest description, nooks and caves, and miniature cascades, there was but one real driving-road. Steep and narrow as it was, its picturesqueness was left undisturbed. On one side it was quite rocky, and a stream trickled, or gushed, or dashed, as it found leeway. Tall old trees stood sentinel like; but the most beautiful feature was the countless rhododendrons in starry white, palest pink, rose, and a vague soft purple. Wild grapes made the air fragrant. Clematis blossomed in snowy showers early in the season, and later flung out its plummy tufts of Aaron's beard. In the autumn bitter-sweet berries vied with the red and bronze sumac.

They halted and glanced up the winding road. Here and there the stream had broken its icy bounds and glittered in the prismatic hues of the sunshine. To Regina all was like a revelation even now. Others might have seen a certain dreariness, but to her there was an intense beauty lying in chains, ready to leap forth into bloom at

the warm breath of spring. Ah, here was the true life, the high, fine sense of nearness to what God had made, not the dwarfing pettiness of man. Why, a summer here would be glorious !

Cynthia chatted ; she hardly heard her. The two hours were like some radiant dream, with the full fruition yet to come.

There was dinner, and they brought home to it wonderful appetites. Then a little later they started for Bradley House. This was in a rather easterly direction, somewhat out of the town, farther out still fifty years ago. Here was another hill with its winding road, not very steep, however. Mrs. Hardin was standing in her cottage door, with a child well bundled up in her arms. She nodded, and gave them good-day.

Bradley House is a little disappointing to Regina at first. It seems so long and low, without the character and dignity a century-old house should have. Still, there is a certain rugged aspect that saves it from being utterly degenerate. The magnificent trees, the stretch of woodland, the hills rising in tiers beyond, full of lights and shadows that one would never weary of studying, made some amends.

"One might get lost in the house," Cynthia declares.

There were two halls, one quite modern that joined the new part to the main house, then a bit of cross hall that had evidently been put in for convenience. Rooms and rooms, some in most immaculate order, some unfurnished, but enough for a large family.

"And there are only four of us," says Regina in dismay.

"But the other heirs might come and want to live with us," appends Cynthia.

"You could shut up part of it, you know ; or we might get you a tenant."

"If it were only half as large," sighs Regina.

"There must be a penalty for family greatness," laughs *Cynthia*.

CHAPTER IV

A LOVE UNCROWNED

Is it possible that on so little acquaintance you should like her ? that but seeing, you should love her ? — *As You Like It.*

“ ‘How delightful it is to smell the smoke of one’s own chimney,’ ” quotes Cynthia, as they walk up the well-remembered block they have tramped over for two years. It is a pleasant afternoon, school is out, and the streets swarm with children. But there must be room somewhere for the rising generation. When they have risen they effervesce and settle down.

“The smoke of hundreds of chimneys, and hundreds of kitchens!” returns Regina in disgust. “I like God’s pure, untainted air better.”

Cynthia gives a little shiver as she recalls the great, lonely house on the top of what looks like a mountain to her now. This familiar place, these narrow stairs, and twilighty halls lead to home.

And when they open the door, are kissed and embraced, welcomed with loving words and confessions of having been sorely missed ; where even the small room, the inexpensive appointments, the well-worn carpet, the cheerful stove with its prisoned, scarlet flames, and the lamp Perdita lights, speak with a mute familiarity that does not require words, even Regina stoops from her lofty pedestal.

They all talk at once. Somehow the story gets told. They have had a splendid time. The town seems to have turned out to do them honor. Mrs. Sayre was charmingly friendly. Beverly must be an Eden of beauty in summer and autumn. And Mr. Sayre insists that they must come as soon as possible. *The house is at their disposal, there are gardens*

and orchards, there are horses and a buggy; but they will be able to afford a carriage.

"And so many articles of food are ridiculously low," says Regina, who is not an impractical person. "Coal is cheaper, and there is no end of wood on the place. We can indulge in famous log fires, and as for pine cones, they look as if they had been strewn around by a cyclone."

Cynthia slips into her favorite corner and leans against the chimney. There is no crocheting for any one, but her mother has some knitting. Regina has already acquired many of the business facts, and begins to explain them concisely. There has been no romancing on the part of Mr. Sayre. The assets are of the best, and there can be no loss,—if any change, a small gain. Mrs. Halford is quite bewildered. She is not old, barely forty-five. Her face is scarcely wrinkled, her hair shows only a few silver threads; but since her illness and her losses, Regina has somehow come to be the managing head of the family.

But Cynthia feels strongly attached to the homely little things of their life here. She has friends that she shall hate to give up, she has a certain attachment to places. She likes the stir and bustle of the city, she enjoys the bits of fun that crop out in street and horse car. She is glad to be relieved from the necessity of working in a dusty, stuffy room, with the conflicting smells of herbs and drugs for fragrance; but she would like to have a rather more commodious home here in the city, dress herself in pretty attire, shop and promenade, go to concerts and theatres, haunt picture galleries, give teas to the friends she likes—it does not occur to her that her girl friends are mostly employed and could not indulge in the luxury of leisure; that she would have to change her associates and make new friends. Life looks rather dreary to her in the great old house, and pedigree and reminiscences are vain things, even if they do savor of antiquity.

Regina is unfeignedly glad to make an entire break with *all things*. She has had in a certain way a bit of experience of which Cynthia is ignorant, at least, the change was

made with less friction in her case. But Regina has found how easily associates can drop one, when lives no longer run in parallel lines, when aims have ceased to be the same. With her sensitive pride, *she* had stepped out. The people for whom she cared most were going in another direction. She could not call them back, they could not take her. It was the fault of circumstances.

So it comes to pass there are not a great many friends for whom she really cares, that it will be a pain to part with. There are few tender associations in this hurrying life, where one must lop off this and that because there is no time for it. Ah, leisure *is* one of the delights of existence, and leisure cannot be had without money. This new life looks delightful to her. There are no such crowds, no hurrying and scurrying; there is an aspect of ease and comfort and time for pleasures; friendships that quite fascinate her. She can make the kind of future she desires; there will not be the continual friction of adapting one's self to what one can never like, to what is utterly foreign to one's nature.

Regina insists that the explanations shall be brief. Their mother has received some money from their great uncle, and they are going to live at the family homestead. After all, they will not be very rich, only comfortable in a moderate way. They will soon pass out of everybody's remembrance in this continually shifting world. She wants to begin her new life free from the old levelling influences.

The spring comes in very early. The cloud of business depression lifts. After all, it has been more of a sifting-out of the weak houses, a check to speculation, to long credits, to the assumption of business rather than business itself, which, after the scare is over, proves to be on a sound foundation. So the world is quite jubilant.

Preparations are made for the removal of the Halfords. Their belongings are not of much account. Some choice articles, heirlooms, and a few pieces of furniture to which their mother *is attached*; their books and clothing can be *packed in a small compass*. The washer-woman is glad to

accept any articles. Two or three poor families to whom they have ministered from time to time are also made happy; the rest can go to a second-hand dealer. At Beverly they will board for a week or two until the house is made comfortable for their mother.

Perdita, like Cynthia, has some sorrows of parting. Both girls are busy with keepsakes. Perdita promises to write letters innumerable. Cynthia, who abominates letter-writing, is more careful, and gives invitations instead. Regina would stand appalled if she dreamed of the list.

There is one friend who has clung to Regina since school days, — a girl two years her senior, but always in the same classes until she joined the labor ranks. Then they met in the same Bible class. Hester King was a kindly, good-tempered, sensible girl, with just enough commonplace prettiness to make her attractive. In how many earthly friendships that diviner explanation has held good — “Because He first loved us.” She had first loved Regina Halford, she had always loved her, though their natures and aspirations were widely dissimilar. It was she who had brought employment to Regina, when she felt so helpless and disheartened, so bitterly disappointed at the untoward turn of affairs. Hester King had become Hester Bowen, and gone to housekeeping in pretty apartments. Her husband was a nice, steady young man, assistant book-keeper for a large machine firm. She was a very happy wife, and now mother of a pretty baby, going on cheerfully with her duties in that state of life she had entered of her own hearty choice. And now she believed marriage a panacea for all the dissatisfactions and restless ambitions of girlhood. One felt so settled, so safely moored, so comfortable, beside all the happiness. She had the good sense not to put this too obtrusively to her dear Regina; indeed, a cunning little stroke of fortune played into her very hands. They had one more room than they wanted, and a young man lately come to the works, but friends already *with Mr. Bowen*, was very glad to find so pleasant a home. He *was not altogether* the average young man, but much given

to studying out problems of all sorts, social as well as mechanical.

"He is just the man for Regina Halford," Mrs. Bowen declared. "I can't bear to think of Regina being an old maid, and there are very few young men attractive to her, besides, they seldom understand such girls. She seems very proud, but she isn't when you truly know her. And Mr. Hilliard is just splendid!"

"If you've any such idea in your curly head, do not hint it to Regina, or she will never come near the house," said Mr. Bowen.

How Hester managed to keep her own counsel puzzled even her husband. Regina came to tea on Sunday evenings; she went to church with them where the younger girls would meet her. She *did* like Mr. Hilliard. He fell into the habit of calling; but when all-seemed going on auspiciously, Regina suddenly took the alarm. She made no break in affairs; he was welcome to drop in and chat, and she rather enjoyed his amazement over Cynthia's sallies and laughable exaggerations. Once she had rather fancied him attracted to her sister. But of late, since Christmas, the unmistakable something had appeared. Now and then she had surprised a look: there was a certain gentleness of tone, a lingering for some last word alone. She was in no wise elated. On the contrary, there was a sense of humiliation. True, she was in the same social standing, — she could not accuse him of presuming, but it annoyed and fretted her. Then she would take herself to task, not on the side of love, but that other intangible quality, pride.

"If he could have liked Cynthia," she said to herself.

But when affairs were going so hard with them, the distorted vision of duty, stern and meagre-faced, thrust in her sharp finger. It is so difficult always to recognize a duty definitely. Where another person's welfare is concerned, doubly so. Her mother liked Mr. Hilliard so much; there were many things to be said in his favor. Was it merely a question of *allowing herself* to love him? Was she the *kind of woman who made an election spontaneously*?

They have been so busy, Regina especially, that when Mrs. Bowen hears the tidings, they are almost on the wing. There are congratulations, lamentations, even tears.

"It will be a lovely place for you to come next summer," says Regina cordially. "You and the baby for a week or two, and Mr. Bowen on Saturday night. You have always been so good to me, Hester, always interested in my doings. We will all strive to give you a delightful visit."

"It is so sudden," moans Hester through tears.

"But it is necessary for mother to be there so that the settlement can begin. You see, it is not quite as if we were going out of the world. We shall not retire to cloisters ourselves, but sometimes return to the old haunts and old friends. And this is not actually good-by."

Hester has a good cry when she has gone. "I'm sure they were really made for each other if they could only see it! And James is confident that Mr. Hilliard will some day be a rich man, if he doesn't theorize too much." Hester is hardly positive as to the nature of theories and their connection with business. "And now Regina will be quite out of his reach, and, of course, there will be other lovers. But he would be glad to take her without a penny! Things never *do* go right in this world — oh, yes, they did with James and me. There wasn't a bit of trouble."

She wipes her eyes, and kisses the baby. Only for this tangle, she would be the happiest body under the sun.

Two or three days later, Regina has an errand at her friends'. There are several articles they want her to have, and a picture she has always admired so much. Then a photograph of the three girls taken together.

"I shall just have time enough to run around before supper," says Regina to the home circle.

But Mrs. Bowen is out. Mr. and Mrs. Bowen have gone together on some special errand, and are expected home soon after six.

"*If you wouldn't mind caring for the baby, Miss Halford,*" the neighbor who has met her before, says plead-

ingly. "I've just had some visitors come, and I ought to be getting supper."

Miss Halford consents. The baby is easily entertained. Six o'clock comes. She puts over the kettle, she sings softly to the baby; but the minutes fly, and another half-hour is gone. Just as she is growing rather nervous they arrive. Both appreciate the gifts, both insist that she shall remain to supper, but she has resolved she will not put herself in Mr. Hilliard's way, as she terms it. And the whole family are coming to make a farewell visit two days hence.

Regina glides quickly down the stairs. The woman on the lower floor is lighting the hall gas. She opens the door, turns, and a tall figure looms up beside her.

"Miss Halford," he exclaims, "good-evening. Oh, why did you not remain? I will walk home with you."

Regina is in a quiver of fear. "It is not worth while," she returns. "I am not at all afraid, and it is not dark. Then it is but a few blocks."

She has marshalled all her forces, yet she knows when he takes her arm, and draws it through his, that she has not defended herself.

"Yes," with a kind of quiet calmness that is invincible. "I have something that I want to say, that I must say. I did not mean to be so hasty, but you are going away" —

"I shall leave thousands behind me in a big city like this. You will not be lonesome," she returns, with a flippancy that would do Cynthia credit.

"But you will take what I value most, —

'Now all the rest are to me like shadows,
I love you, Douglas, tender and true.'"

They have gone down the steps and half the length of the block. It is quite dusky, and people are hurrying along. No one minds, no one even glances at them. Something impels her to keep step, to make no scene.

"I did not really understand it until two days ago," he *proceeds*, before she has collected her wits. "I liked you

so much from the first. I was not really thinking of marriage. I said to myself what a splendid comrade this girl would make, what a friend, what a fellow student! But young men and young women are seldom comrades — that is reserved for a later period. They sometimes play at friendship with indifferent success. There was one manly course open — I let my regard flow whither it would — it ran to your feet. I loved you — a little here, a little there — you were so difficult. If it had been coquetting, but I knew it was not that. Once, a fortnight ago, you softened a very little, and I could guess the royal temper of your regard when you loved a man. ‘She is waiting to be quite sure before she gives the faintest sign,’ I told myself, and I honored you for it. I meant to be patient, yet you don’t know how I longed to take you to myself, to shield you from the cares and burdens that should never fall upon a woman. You have been so heroic. Do you think any of it has been lost on me? And when I heard you were going away, — well, I suppose there is nearly always something that betrays a man to himself, like a revelation, and brings out his strongest desire, — I knew then what manner of love mine was: that all its currents flowed into the one channel, that I wanted some little word, some hope” —

He has spoken very low, very rapidly, with an intensity that has stricken her almost helpless from a variety of emotions. Once she has tried to draw away her arm, but his pressure has tightened. Her very throat has been constricted. If she had dared look upward — he is much taller than she — but he has not even glanced at her face, which is pallid rather than scarlet.

“Oh,” she says at last, with a soft little cry, “you are” — cruel she has meant to add, but a certain sense of justice restrains her. Has he not a right to strive for what he wants? He is not the first one who has striven vainly. “I cannot, I cannot. I thought I had made it plain.”

“There has been so little opportunity for a true under-

standing," he continues with a gravity that is almost dispassionate. "We have discussed so few subjects with a real, personal leaning, we have not come near enough for one—for a woman with no very wide experience, to tell whether she could love or not. With a man, I think it is different. Something attracts him, he sees the sparkle of the jewel in a mine, it may be, and he toils on until he gets it. What certain knowledge leads him when it is a woman's heart, God knows. Your finest philosopher could not explain it. And this has led me. By the very wrench the word of your going away gave me, I knew what I wanted, what I had to do. But I will not hurry you, my queen. You shall have weeks, nay, months. You shall study me—for I think you have not allowed yourself to do that. You will see how patient I can be, with all my lover's impatience. We are both young, and if our minds grow together, if love finds day by day its counterpart"—

"Oh, you must not, you shall not," she cries with a touch of anger. Such a little thing has moved her to disdain. In passing the corner lamp she has caught sight of him. He is in his rough tweed suit. The cuffs are frayed. The front is worn threadbare. His shoes are dusty—a sort of yellowish clay adheres to them. Like a flash she can see this man coming home to her at night in the small room plainly furnished, with the supper waiting on the table. She has no disguises for semi-poverty, she has seen so much of it in various homes. Then there are hard winters, failures, lack of employment, strikes. When she is well out of the slough, it would be folly to fall back into it. If she were wild with love, it might be some excuse. She will go her way, he must go his.

"Not tell you the truth—when I love you? Is it so much of an insult to know you have filled a man's soul to the exclusion of all other things? For forty-eight hours you have been a beautiful wraith standing by my very elbow until I have almost forgotten what I was about. I did not sleep, thinking of you, planning a future with you *in it.*"

They have reached her house, but he goes straight on and she cannot turn. There are very few people in the street now.

"Listen," she entreats, for she is strangely touched in spite of herself, "I do not love you:" her voice is clear and low, but with an almost steely inflection. "You have been mistaken. It would be cruelty to let you go on dreaming."

There is a silence. For a moment or two there is absolutely no sound in the street. He pauses, as if he just realized that he was taking her out of her way.

"You have not said that you cannot love me. O my queen, my queen, will you not try?"

"I—I have some plans for my own life," she says almost weakly. "I had them before, but misfortunes came and I was compelled to lay them aside. I can take them up again without detriment to any one, and I have resolved to. I am not sure that marriage is among them, it has not been so far"—a scarlet flames up in her face at the remembrance of her having contemplated marriage with him for a much less cause than love, and she despises herself for the slight put upon her womanhood by her own very thoughts. "So you see it is better to go our separate ways unhampered. It would make me miserable to be held even by an idea that I owed ever so slight a fealty to some one else."

He turns with her and they walk very slowly, but even then they reach the point of separation too soon for him. It seems as if he could walk till dawn with her by his side, even if she never spoke, so that he could feel her warm arm near his heart. How slim and graceful she is, how fine and clear-cut her face, how sweet a mouth for one to kiss his love into, to kiss one back when life seemed tame, dull, and dreary, as it comes to all when the glamour begins to fade.

She puts one foot up on the step. The woful moment *has come for him*, the moment of release for her.

"*Do you believe in presentiments?*" he asks suddenly.

"I cannot explain to you, but it seems to me as if on some other level our lives were to meet again, and we were to know each other better. You need not fear that I shall persecute you. I might strive hard for a woman, but after all her love must be a free gift; and I could not take her without it. Good-night. I want to solace myself with the remembrance that I have never said good-by to you. O my queen, you will never have a more loyal lover!"

He slips the glove, a soft silken one, from the hand that has been so near, and presses it to his lips. Then he goes his way, never looking back. There is a manly vigor to his step: even in the half-darkness she can see how straight he carries himself. There is something masterful, resolute, as if he could fight his way through all obstacles. Ah! the pity of it is that these men with strong bodies and dominant wills rarely do much of the world's best fighting. Is it a lack of useful, practical education? of the right kind of training?

She walks slowly up the stairs. Could she have done this thing for love's sake? Would it have been nobler to take a poor man's lot, to cook meals, to tidy the house, to nurse children, to give up pure ideals? Ah, thank God there are women in the world whose highest pleasure is to do this! She does not despise them, far from it. Just now she honors them. They may be the missionaries who help to save the world. But she wants to do her work in a different fashion. She can fancy herself enacting some other rôle to quite as high purpose. And yet — will she ever have so really noble a lover? Indeed, she may never have any other lover.

The supper is through with. Cynthia is clearing away the things.

"Oh, we thought you would stay at Hester's. Why, how pale you look!"

Regina hastens to explain the delay, but goes no further. She drinks a cup of tea, then complains of headache and lies on the little *tête-à-tête* that will soon adorn a second-hand shop. Will she see him again when they go to tea at Hester's? If *she* could stay at home.

As for Hilliard, he walks the streets in amaze. He is not hungry, he is not tired even, though he strides now with passion beating in every pulse, almost anger indeed. How poorly he has served his cause! There are a hundred things he might have said, appeals he might have made that would have been more difficult to withstand. Providence has befriended her, and he feels inclined to quarrel with Providence. If she were still poor and struggling with an untoward fate, would she come to him? would she let him help her then? How many sweet fancies he has had of bringing her flowers and books and pretty gifts when he was her declared lover; of taking her to different places; of discussing some of the poems he knows by heart—he has quite a romantic side to his nature. And she might come to take an interest in the books he likes, the plans he dreams over.

It is barely nine in the evening when he walks down past the house and up again, on the opposite side of the street. The windows are alight; he can almost see the figures through the drapery. Some one comes to close the inside blinds, raises the window and leans out. Ah! that is Cynthia, he can tell by the curls. Yet *she* is there. Her face is as distinct before him as a fine ivorytype. Sometime he must see her again. Where or how he cannot tell.

Regina Halford accompanies the others with great fear and trembling to Mrs. Bowen's. She is not quite certain even now but that one look will undo all her resolve, and she berates herself. It is not love, but a curious pity for him. However, she is not put to the test. Hilliard has taken a brief journey, to see his sister who is ill.

Mrs. Bowen seems a little out of heart. Her biscuits are not quite up to the mark, her jelly is not as solid as usual, and she wishes she had made some other kind of cake. As if one need fuss about what one eats, thinks Regina, when all is good enough. But her hostess looking at the slim, *proud girl sighs a little over her broken dream.*

After that come the last things, the last look “at

the shop windows in their spring attire," Cynthia says mournfully, and they leave the city behind them. Regina is free to begin her new life of heroic purposes, strongly idealized perhaps; but youth believes so many things possible when the clue is held in one's hand. Ah me, it is good to be young for the splendid possibilities. One sets up standards and furls flags of hope and belief, but it is better to have idealized some of the grand truths and tried to live up to them, even in a mistakenly conscientious way, than to have trodden them into the dust.

CHAPTER V

A NEW LINK

Fronted unuttered words and said them nay,
And smiled down love till it had nought to say.
ANON.

AFTER all, circumstances influence us so much, shape us unconsciously, especially when they are of a kind that favor our secret beliefs. It is flattering to find our self-approval has been echoed by others before us, older, wiser people, who have tried many theories, and held fast to the best. Later on, we pay less tribute to experience when we come to realize that each soul must agonize for itself, that to-day's duties and joys and sorrows are so unlike last year's that we can draw no comparison. It is the whole large horizon, not one bit of blue or gray sky.

More than a year has passed since the Halfords came to Beverly. It is May now. The whole world has been astir for many weeks. All the air is sweet, so sweet that one begins to take it quite as a matter of course. The delicate foliage of the beeches and elms, the light green tassels of the larch shimmer and laugh, as it were, in the faces of the sombre firs and the dull cedars. All the hillsides are quivering with verdure and bloom; even the crags and long stretches of serrated rock have a dim, soft grayness. Everywhere is the beauty God gives, the lavish variety that verges upon waste, it would seem, since so few enjoy it.

Bradley House had taken on a little different aspect. Four women, all beauty lovers, must naturally have left some impress. The trees had been thinned out, the scraggy, dying ones removed. The vines were better trained, and new ones planted. The flower-beds were changed from

their prim aspect to that of more modern grace. The roses, and there were multitudes of them, had been carefully preserved. The approach looked much more inviting. The porch in the middle of the long front was found in a ruinous condition, and a new and commodious one had been put up with a pretty roof overhead, that added greatly to the impressiveness of the old house.

Inside, they had changed the appearance considerably. All the sleeping-rooms had been removed to the second floor. They had hunted over the old piles of stuff, and exhumed some treasures.

"For," says Cynthia, "I am afraid I shall never admire old rubbish merely for its antiquity. If it is ugly, it is ugly! Though I have read somewhere that the next best thing to being a handsome man is to be an extremely plain one. But carpets and quilts are not men, any more than Mrs. Molloy's pigs were not children," and she laughs.

They treat themselves to the pretty adornment of one room, the best parlor; for the others they manage with the best of what there is. The "new part" they let quite alone. When the other heirs arrive on the scene the permanent ownership of Bradley House will be discussed. There is a feeling on Mr. Sayre's part that the Bradley heir, if he ever comes, should have the first choice. But they have plenty of space, and indeed the rooms are so large that at first they huddle together for mere sociability.

Regina learns that although this branch of the family has not especially distinguished itself unless for great age and the accumulation of money, which seeing it has all been honestly come by is no disgrace; there are others who have honorable records on college lists. There have been judges, representatives, noted lawyers, a foreign minister, and various professors. There are distant relatives in some of the southern counties, in Philadelphia also, that have come to light, when inquiry was made for heirs. She is proud of all this. She delights in the consciousness of ancestry back of her. Already she has met several of these persons who have come to talk over claims and

connection, and she feels quite related to that larger world.

Beverly people are quaintly delightful. There is a touch of formality in the beginning, as if you were being balanced in some invisible mind scale, measured to see if you can fill certain spaces, then all is charming hospitality. There is so much time for everything. There are no crushes and rushes and clashes of entertainments on the same day. A kindly regard for each other's convenience in this matter seems to pervade the town, that is, the society part. There are some working-people, to be sure, but they are a class and a law to themselves.

There is in Beverly a very stylish "Young Ladies' Seminary." Cynthia and Perdita are started at once. It is at a distance, and in the morning they are driven over; if the weather is fine they walk home. Regina envies them the privileges they grumble about. She takes lessons in French; she studied it a little before, and has picked up a good deal. She joins the class in foreign literature, and for the rest, masters other things at home. The piano comes, and Perdita is wild over that. Regina follows the lessons; she will never make a finished musician, but it is such an ordinary accomplishment she cannot afford to do without it.

The year has been a very busy one, a happy one as well. They have made friends, and are a good deal admired, especially Regina, who seems to have an air and a breeding that do credit to her name. There has been a certain sense of loneliness in the old house, but there are so many pleasures. They keep a man and a maid, a phaeton and a carriage. The horses are broken to the saddle, and the girls ride. Mrs. Halford is very happy in the pleasure of her children, and she takes naturally to the added luxury. Then, as prosperity sometimes comes in processions, her unfortunate stocks come up again, and at the right moment Mr. Sayre advises her to sell out and reinvest, so she has a snug little income of her own.

Mrs. Bowen has not been forgotten in their prosperity.

Her week or two lengthened itself out to a delightful month. The baby thrived and rejoiced. They talk over old times a little; Regina has a way of dismissing them which is the perfection of tact.

She hears, of course, all that Hester knows about Mr. Hilliard, who has left the Works, "a very foolish move, James thinks, when he was getting such a salary. He has gone off on some expedition — about an iron mine. James thinks that sharpers will get hold of what little money he has, and work him for all he is worth, and then throw him over. He was such a nice fellow, too! but always full of theories, and those men never are successes in life."

Mrs. Bowen is very thankful that she did not prevail in leading her friend into an imprudent marriage. Of course if the fortune had *not* come, all aspects of the case would have been different. It would have proved a big blunder. Regina will make a superior marriage; she has grown much handsomer; she has a grand air and a fortune.

They invite two more visitors from the noisy, sweltering city, two elderly single women Mrs. Halford has known a great part of her life, who live in two small rooms, and eke out a scanty income by work for stores, but they are refined and appreciative women. They are so grateful, with the fine, unobtrusive gratitude that shows in the humid eyes and a bit of tremulousness in the voice, that somehow Regina is strangely touched. There comes a vague impression that she has not gathered quite all the golden strands of life in her ideal, brilliant as it seems.

Regina and her mother are sitting on the porch this lovely May morning. Mrs. Halford is crocheting a slumber robe, they are so useful in the hammocks, and she loves to be busy. Regina has set her easel out of doors, and is doing a bit of painting for which she wants this especial light. Her eyes and thoughts wander, the first over the glowing picture, the hills, the town, the river and the mountains over opposite in all the gradations and mysteries of light and shade that no human brain can fathom, no color reproduce, no hand create. Why she should suddenly

take the wide detour to the city, and see again the dingy brick rows with their pretentious lintels and cornices, the narrow windows, the close stifling street with its continuous roar of traffic, is inexplicable. She shudders a little.

"Are you cold?" asks her mother.

"Oh, no; not in this glorious sunshine."

She has lost the inspiration. She is not an artist any more than she is a musician, but she has a sincere love for both, and she is not working for a name. She thinks again — there are Mr. and Mrs. Bowen and a new baby daughter just announced; she must send it some gift. It is odd they have never heard from Mr. Hilliard. She turns her head and indulges in a scornful smile that she does not care to have questioned. A loyal lover indeed! She can almost hear the deep, strong voice, made soft and low that no passer-by shall be able to catch a word. True, she has expected nothing, but the lovers of romance would have importuned. It seems as if almost any man who cared, would have made some sign. It is all right; not for worlds would she have it different, but that such things, that hundreds of other slights should be laid on the divine altar of love by souls not worthy to be admitted within the doors of the temple! It wounds her. She has a high and sacred estimate of love, higher now than it was a year ago. What if circumstances had been otherwise and she *had* listened. He would have loved her up to his light. She cannot imagine his being consciously cruel, but the time of indifference — when he will love another — why, perhaps he may be some woman's husband now, this very day; be plodding to and fro in his workman's garb, his grimy hands — she remembers that his hands were wonderfully well shapen and soft. *She* cooks the meals, sweeps the house, does her marketing, mending, turns and makes over her gowns, repairs the frayed edges of coats, sews on buttons, and gossips with her neighbors. A loyal lover! The birds seem warbling it; somehow, the very winds rustle to that refrain. What was she going to put down in this corner by this slim young birch?

"I think I will go in and practise a while," she says to her mother. "Somehow, I can't get on with the painting this morning."

She takes up a difficult exercise. No "loyal lover" can creep into this.

Is there some curious clairvoyance between souls? The new names mean the same unexplainable power. This brilliant May morning a man steps off the train, asks a direction, and, following it, makes the proper turn. Here is the court-house. And here is Court Street, the first block pretty well filled with lawyers' offices. He studies the signs — "Upham & Sayre," then he enters, and asks if he can see Mr. Sayre.

"Will he be seated? Mr. Sayre will be at liberty in ten minutes."

He nods affirmatively, but stands for some time in the doorway looking over at the park. Great rugged elms there are with here and there a handful of young twigs growing out of the gnarled boles, and glancing up at the ragged branches overhead. They must be very old, he thinks. The younger ones, mature themselves, flaunt their straightness and their long feathery arms at the others. Maples, beeches, evergreens in great variety, two or three silver birches, some sturdy oaks, dogwoods in bloom, and here a Judas tree with its suggestion of purple. Trodden paths cross it diagonally; straight ones, too, flagged — perhaps those most used. A soft turf, rather sparse in the shady places, but here and there a patch of emerald green in the sunshine. Ah, how beautiful! And there are thousands of souls who will never see anything like it this side of heaven. The man sighs.

He is a tall, strongly made young fellow of eight or nine and twenty, with a sort of assertive figure, as if he was quite sure of the capabilities of his physique; one that men recognize immediately; endurance, not simply negative strength that may brace itself for a shock, but the intelligent, active power. His arms are long and well shaped, his hands the kind that express tenacity, yet also

a curious gentleness, that can smoothe the pillow of the sick or hold an enemy at bay. Now and then one sees hands with a startling capability of expression.

The face is not handsome, but clean-cut, vigorous, with a kind of eagerness that indicates continual action rather than repose. There is the vehemence of youth, tempered by a kind of shrewd philosophy glancing in the eyes which would be grave, even sorrowful, without it. They are very dark, but not black. The dark hair is shorn close, the mustache is much lighter, and has ends that almost curl. The chin is broad, determined.

He has been watching a beautiful little chipmunk run up and down a tree, and occasionally disappear in a hollow. The smile illumines his face like a sunrise. Then there is a stir within. The client leaves the inner office, and the stranger turns, crosses the room, and is ushered within. He searches his coat pocket, and draws therefrom a bit of torn newspaper.

"This is your advertisement, I believe, for heirs to the Bradley estate?"

"Yes," answers Mr. Sayre. "Be seated," and he makes a polite gesture toward the vacant chair. "Are you?"

"I am interested in a way," he replies with a certain pleasant indifference. "Have any of the heirs been found? I say heirs — you have put it in the collective."

"Yes," says Mr. Sayre. "There are two still wanting — or some certain word of their death."

"Was there — a Mrs. Halford?"

"Mrs. Halford is one of the heirs," in a quiet tone.

"And — if the others appear — does it make any difference with her share?" he asks eagerly.

"Oh, no, not at all. Well, if we proved to the satisfaction of the law that they were *dead*, the estate would be divided among the living ones."

"And if these other people simply did not appear?"

"Their part would be held in abeyance until the *presumption of their death* proved convincing."

"*And it can make no difference to Mrs. Halford?*"

He wants to be certified again. Then he adds, —

"Mrs. Halford is the heir, not her daughters?"

"She was a niece of old Silas Bradley. All the others of the second generation, I think, must be dead, unless it is Morton Bradley. We are looking in the third. We have found one grandniece also. The descendants of Mary Bradley, married name Winterburne, and this Morton are the subjects of our remaining inquiry."

"She went to Cohasset and died some five years later," remarks the young man. "She had two children, but the infant daughter died also. Otis Winterburne married and had one son, then died. His widow moved away, married a Joseph Hilliard, had one daughter, and some ten years later she died."

"Exactly," says Mr. Sayre, pleased to see it put so tersely. "And this young Winterburne, though he must have reached manhood some years since, is the person we are searching for. He has a half sister, you say?"

"And he would take" —

"One quarter of the estate."

The young man seems to consider. If he were dead without a will, would his half sister be his natural heir? His mother surely would. Well, he does not make Regina Halford any poorer by claiming his rights.

"I am Norman Winterburne," he says very simply. "I have generally gone by my step-father's name; he preferred it when I was small. He was a good father to me."

There is a respect in this, a manly honesty that appeals to the lawyer, and wins his favor.

"That is where the clew was lost in tracing you out," he returns briskly. Then he studies the young man attentively, who sits composedly under the scrutiny. He is impressed by his general bearing, his fine physique, his clear complexion, well opened, fearless eyes, that carry in them an expression of only half-veiled tenderness.

Hilliard nods in the pause.

"You have *your* proofs? The law is an insistent *master*."

"Yes ; it's rather odd. I had been skirmishing around among iron mines in Pennsylvania for some months. On my return, I went to visit my sister, and she had found this in an old paper, — how old we could not tell. I didn't think at first it could mean me. I did not know that I had any relations good enough to leave me a fortune."

"He didn't will it," comments the lawyer with a dry smile. "What Mr. Bradley's intention concerning his money really was will remain unknown to us. No doubt this is as satisfactory, however."

"I understood at first that the whole estate was to the Halfords. It is only within a few days that I heard of the division," and he glances up still questioningly.

"Quite a mistake, as you must see when the man died intestate. The house and the farm will be kept until— well, I have faith now in the return of the missing Bradley even. Having the family name, it seems only just that he should have the first choice. As all the rest is personal property it can be apportioned without any difficulty. I have paid out the two shares ; yours can be taken any time with accrued interest."

"We are all — relatives," the young man says with a peculiar smile.

"Yes. That does not necessarily cause agreement, but I hope you may all prove friendly. You will be certain to like the Halfords — you will doubtless desire to meet them. Are you residing at a distance ?"

"For a month or so I have been at Warwick. Some business there has interested me."

"Ah, so near ?" Mr. Sayre has half a mind to propose a walk up the hill to Bradley House, then he studies the young man again. There is nothing objectionable in him that he can see, yet perhaps it would be more complimentary to consult the ladies first. "Have you the necessary documents with you ?" he asks almost immediately.

"No, I haven't. My sister has the family relics in her possession. I will send for them at once."

Then he rises. There are no further questions that he

can ask about the Halfords without betraying his previous knowledge of them. It is altogether within Miss Halford's province to say whether the friendship shall be renewed. He has the obstinate faith of a man that most things *do* come about, though his future purposes have been quite undefined to himself. Then the whole year has been so full of exciting matters to him.

"When they come," referring to the papers, "shall I drop you a line?"

"Yes, if you will. Then we shall be sure of no delay."

"Good-morning," says Hilliard, and the lawyer wishes him a pleasant adieu. After all, thinks Mr. Sayre, he has yet to prove his claim.

It is like a dream when Hilliard steps out into the fragrant sunshine. Not the mere fact of money, though Heaven knows he is glad enough to have that. It would take a long while to accumulate the sum by plodding industry, and though he has gripped the lowest round of fortune, money will help him to run up the ladder more nimbly. But the strange part is his connection with the Halfords, his being brought back so curiously within Regina's orbit.

Hilliard consults his watch and decides he will lose the next train, if needs be, in a venture. He skirts the side of the park — what a picturesque old town it is, to be sure! He inquires of a lad the direction to Bradley House, and finds it quite a walk, but he is fond of walking. He ruminates in a chaotic fashion, listening to the singing of innumerable birds, glancing admiringly at half century old trees as if he longed to stop and shake the end of a bough as if it were a friendly hand. There are great clumps of shrubbery in bloom, fruit trees that are perfect mounds of whiteness, or the pinks and reds of apple blossoms. Pretty yards in their garniture of frailer flowers, urns and vases with trailing vines and bright red gypsy pots swinging from their tripods. The only drawback is there are so many alike. *One cannot keep up the same kind of admiration continuously.* The little perked up story and a

half cottage, dingy, and with a disreputable lean-to, and untrimmed, tangled bushes and vines is a relief. He comes out to the picturesque stream, crosses the bridge and keeps on, his eyes wandering to that eastward, gently sloping ascent. With the curious sense of two distinct individualities, one here and the other living over the autumn when he first saw Regina Halford—one Sunday evening at tea at her friend's. Her gown was a curious metallic blue,—he would hardly have remembered any other color,—and instead of the usual bands of linen she had a soft fall of lace at neck and wrists. And all the winter,—when he had come to watch her, and wish he knew how to make things easier for her. Mrs. Bowen's incautious sympathy had revealed many of the straits and pinches. Cynthia's frank railing at poverty amused him. Regina made no sign as to any part or lot in the matter. He had a curious chivalry concerning the sex, that he understood was quite old-fashioned. He hated to think of any woman really struggling for bread, and fighting for it was pitiful. He wanted them all in pretty homes, with leisure to keep themselves sweet, attractive, and winsome. Marriage did not always do it, he observed. When there was baking and ironing and cooking, Mrs. Bowen was flushed and tired,—yes, rather cross sometimes, not snappish; she had a pleasant temper, but that strain of physical fatigue that reacted upon the nerves. He had studied it elsewhere. He had fancied once he should like to be a physician, then he shrank back appalled at the idea that he must witness suffering, must treat it even and smile hopefully over it when there was no cure, when death stood at his elbow. And there were other ills,—poverty, anxiety; he could not look upon them in the light of blessings—they were forced upon one by circumstances. Did it please God, he wondered, that some poor woman should toil till past midnight, and lie sleepless on her pillow till dawn, thinking how to-morrow's bread was to be gained?

He used to dream of Regina Halford under more favorable circumstances, in a beautiful home; yes, he would like

luxury for her. A warm and fragrant atmosphere, trailing gowns of soft, flowing white, beautiful furniture, pictures, music, the little stir of going and coming, of receiving friends graciously, as she could, of sitting in the twilight by a grate fire, the soft shadows playing all about her, of some one coming — yes, there must be a lover or a husband, a woman's existence was incomplete without love, and hers must be blissfully happy. He was not jealous of this tall, strong, imperious but generous lover at first. When it came that the room grew smaller, the appointments less sumptuous, her gowns more simple, he hardly remembered. The poems read were the ones he was so fond of. The books — how did he know she would be fond of scientific things, of social problems that were stirring up the world? Does a man dream himself in love when on the other side is the hard, steady effort of his own ambitions? Hilliard did. Then he waited for the intangible sign, — not that she loved, but that he might draw nearer, might share her cares and assume some of her burdens.

He had not paid any especial attention to the fact that there was some property left them, — an old country house somewhere. Just at this time he was studying at a great problem that was to advance his own fortunes. There was a vague idea in his mind that they would sell the place — a few delicate women could not manage a farm. And the certain knowledge that they were going away, that she would not be here in the same city, that he could not drop in and spend an hour watching her, suddenly shaped and crystallized his desires, brought so strange a knowledge that at first it seemed almost pain, a delicious throe of that divine agony when love is born after long waiting and watching.

He had stumbled on the occasion while his pulses were still seething in ardent tumult; he had blundered too. True, he had not meant to ask for her love, only to confess his, and wait in generous loyalty. The utter surprise stunned him. Of course he did not mean to give up his *hopes, only to settle upon some better way*. Presently he

understood that the change in her life was to be greater than anything he could give her at this period. He must not only wait but work. When he recovered himself a little, he went at both bravely.

And now, if this share of the fortune could go directly to her, he would not take a step in the matter, though it is an absolute factor in his advancement. It will bring to him the very prosperity he dreamed of for her sake. It cannot fail to draw them together in a friendly way, to put them on a footing where all the sequences will come in naturally.

He pauses suddenly. The Hardins' cottage is in sight, and here is the winding avenue. He does not mean to go up boldly and storm the fortress to-day, so he makes a little detour, and finds himself in a grassy orchard, where the soft winds shake about a shower of blossom leaves. Ah, how fragrant, how beautiful! A thrill speeds through his pulses as he remembers that he, too, has some rights in this old gray stone house, that *his* ancestors as well as hers lived here. He hears the sounds of music throbbing on the air; he sees one figure sitting on the porch, and he knows at another glance who it is. And the easel — yes, she is drifting into the life of leisurely delight he dreamed for her, but he has not brought it to her. Ah, what can he give her now? He is as helpless in his love as he was more than a year ago.

The sound of the piano ceases. Regina Halford comes to the doorway in some soft, light, clinging attire, tall, lithesome as a young nymph. Did he think her beautiful before? He cannot clearly remember, but she is beautiful now in her slim stateliness. What a picture she makes in that dark old frame with the dim background. Ah, what shall he do to win her in this changed atmosphere?

He turns away and steals over the slope, down to the road. The buttercups dazzle in the sunshine as the wind blows them about. Everything seems tremulous with a

wonderful sense of loveliness. He has seen her again. He will always love her, come what may. He is too sturdy, too determined to look long on the dark side, and he has an abiding faith that fortune holds a good deal for him in her golden hand. It is the persistent who win.

CHAPTER VI

FATHER AND SON

Having given your mind play with subtlety, revolve your affairs little by little. — ARISTOPHANES.

NORMAN HILLIARD finds that by a slight intervention of fate he has not lost his train. There has been a detention further up the road. He paces the platform slowly, his eyes taking in the picture opposite, the lazy river flowing between. Here it broadens out, up a distance it narrows again, and he can hear a dim rush of some rapids. There is a covered bridge with the quaintness of thirty years ago. Opposite the rocky ridge rises higher and higher, the narrow ledges pause as if they had stopped to take breath in their ascent, and the green arms of Nature had prisoned them for an instant, long enough to start a bit of vegetation, a hazy bluish green strip of bushes and stunted cedars and straggling young trees that at a later growth must lose their slender hold and go toppling over. The soft purples are slashed by openings of silvery gray; there are touches of vivid greens still in their spring glory; there are browns of every hue; the granite rocks sparkle as if set with gems, which, after all, are mostly deceptive mica. What a picture it is!

The up-train winds around a bend in the river that one can see distinctly here. It is lost to sight a moment, but not to sound. There is a little stir, the freight truck is run out, and a breath of expectation seems to pervade the stragglers. The train slows up, stops. There is one passenger to get on, three or four huddle out of one end of the car, then a young man who turns and puts out his hand to *steady* an elderly companion, who may be his father. The *act has such a kindly, every-day grace* that Hilliard notes

them both. They come up the platform and watch till a trunk and a box is taken off.

The younger man is in a certain way handsome. He would be effeminate but for his size, which is fully up to the average. There is a wonderful litheness of contour that shows in every movement, makes him look slenderer than he really is. His figure is perfect enough for a model. The hands are slim enough for a woman, white, soft, of course, with long fingers and pink nails. There is a luxurious air about him that at once removes him from any suspicion of manual labor. A fine, fair skin, a straight nose with quivering nostrils, a golden-brown mustache, silky and curling at the long ends, and a bit of light-brown hair showing the same tendency to gold perceptible in it, but it has none of the reddish tints. There is a curious quality in the face that attracts Hilliard, that repels him also, or at least gives him a touch of distrust, a kind of mystery rather than reticence, not strong enough indeed for the latter.

The elder man is as tall but slightly bent, is pale and fragile, and glances about in a questioning manner, as if fearful everything was not quite right. His hair is silvery, his beard somewhat long and straggling, and of a silky whiteness. The nose is straight as the other's, and has the same flexibility, the eyes are furtive, the skin full of fine wrinkles, and he looks like quite an old man. As they stand talking, Hilliard studies them. He is fond of watching people, and formulates theories about them when he has a leisure moment like this. How true his theories may be he seldom has an opportunity of knowing. Oddly enough he rarely sets out to analyze the people he likes.

Before these two have finished their consultation his train comes along, and he is whirled away with the picture still in his mind. They are unusual people, and they haunt him in a baffling, elusive way. Later on he feels like calling it a presentiment.

"We want our dinner. The hotel will be best," says *the young man to his companion.*

"Dinner — oh, yes," with a thin little laugh. "There would be small chance of dinner at Bradley House, I suppose. I wonder whether it is closed? But we'll soon change all that. It should have been mine twenty years ago. No one else has any real right. We will walk in and take possession, the last of our name, my son. For the women couldn't carry that. And they were paid their part," rubbing his thin, wrinkled hands.

The younger makes some inquiries of the station agent. A hotel is near. There are people living in Bradley House, some of the heirs.

The brows knit on hearing this last. He rejoins his father, and the two walk a short distance to the hotel, which has a rural but inviting appearance. They take a room and free themselves from the defilements of travel, then find a very appetizing dinner set before them, with a clean cloth and napkins. The elder man has a capricious appetite. When he has eaten all that his son can gently force upon him, and emptied his glass of wine, the younger glances around cautiously.

"Bradley House is tenanted," he says in a low, soft voice as if his purpose was to disarm. "Some of the heirs are there. There may have been a will, you know."

"I don't believe it!" He doubles up his thin, wrinkled hand, and would bring it down on the table, but the son's eye, ever on the alert, catches it. "Jasper, no one *has any right*, do you hear? I have told you a hundred times that every one of them was paid her portion and went her way. Aunt Joanna did not like any of the marriages. They weren't the marrying kind, those old folks," and the vacant laugh is a little shrill, perhaps weakly vindictive. "You see, then, they have no right to a share" —

"Unless there *is* a will," says the son impatiently. He has used this caution so many times. "According to the wording of the advertisement I should think not, but we cannot be sure until we know the facts. I have been considering. It will be the wisest move to go at once to *Bradley House*."

"Wisest — of course. I have been telling you so all the time. Possession is nine points of the law, and it will be a difficult thing to dislodge *us* ;" and again his thin laugh ends his sentence rather triumphantly.

Jasper Bradley looks out of the window into the quiet street. Through a space in the trees he sees the mountains over opposite with their nooks and innumerable tints. A sensation of restfulness has stolen over him — it may be possible his anxieties are at an end, but he hardly dare believe it so. He is tired, tired ; more weary and worn out than his twenty-six years give him any right to be.

"Well, let us go," insists the father, rising.

"Wait." Jasper Bradley walks to the desk and pays his bill with a kind of elegant deliberation. Then he orders a hack sent to the station for the luggage, pacifying his father meanwhile, who betrays the impatience of a child.

They are taken up presently and go leisurely through the pleasant streets. Morton Bradley's eyes are kindled to a glow of pleasurable interest as he recognizes familiar places and enumerates them. His face seems to gather a certain strength and reliance ; he holds his shoulders more erect.

"Yes, yes," as they turn into the winding drive, the "lane" of old. "How nice it all looks ! It must have been freshened up a bit. Ninety years and more Uncle Silas lived here — and if I live to be that old —"

They have reached the level, the clear open space, and the driver halts at the porch where the family are congregated. Jasper from the window takes in the picture. Two girls sit on the steps with some embroidery and bright-hued silks spread about in pretty confusion. The easel is there, but Regina is not painting. She has been reading aloud to her small audience. Mrs. Halford is in the hammock, almost buried in cushions.

These, no doubt, are the people who have the nine points his father so strenuously insists upon. Jasper springs out, this time leaving *the man* to assist his father, and advances *a few steps with an imperious grace that summons the tall*

girl forward to meet him. He looks his very best. He is a handsome young man with the impress of good breeding and a certain air of the world that is unmistakable.

"We heard some one was here before us," he begins in a mellifluous tone, and with a gracious smile as if he would excuse them for trespass. "We are the Bradleys: this," now he takes his father's arm, "is Mr. Morton Bradley, my father. I believe we are the sole owners of the family name, and we have been advertised for as heirs."

"Yes," answers Regina with a stateliness that would not discredit the family name. "Have you seen Mr. Sayre—but of course you come from him. Will you not accept our hospitality and be seated?"

With this she draws her mother's big splint rocker forward, and a smaller one for the young man.

"No," he answers; "we have not seen any one. This being my father's home in all his early years, still seems home to him, and he was impatient to come at once. We merely stopped at the hotel for our dinner. I hope we are not intruding? We have our luggage"—

"Bradley House ought to welcome you; it has been awaiting your coming for so long," she returns calmly but with a little embarrassment. "These are my sisters;" both girls nod courteously. Mrs. Halford has deftly extricated herself from the hammock, and the daughter, turning to her, continues, "and this is my mother, Mrs. Halford."

Both gentlemen bow politely.

The trunk comes down with a crunch on the gravelled path and the man looks uncertain as to its destination.

"I am afraid we *have* intruded." Jasper rises with a fine sort of deprecation in his gesture. "My father thought we might find a tenant here, or some sort of keeper"—

"We are merely tenants at will." Regina smiles in a manner that stirs the young man to interest. It is such a friendly smile, yet so self-contained. She is very different from anything he has imagined of these aunts who were *said to have made poor marriages*. And although she has *come to love the old house well*, they all know Mr. Sayre

has reserved the first chance for Mr. Bradley. "As I said, if you will accept our hospitality until matters are somewhat arranged — mother."

Regina has a misgiving that she is exceeding the duties of her position.

"We are only using part of the house, since our family is so small," begins Mrs. Halford.

"My father's was the new part; it was built for him," announces the elder gentleman in a somewhat grandiose manner. "I was born here, — the only one of the old name. It was my home" —

"You will pardon him, I am sure," persuasively. "And we are in some degree relatives," says the son with an intentness far from displeasing. He does not mean to go away, and they must recognize his father's claim. But there need be no dispute in the beginning. He wants to see more of this regal girl.

"We have two spare rooms," says Mrs. Halford with practical cordiality. "If they will answer until your part can be made comfortable, you will be most welcome. Shall the trunks be carried in?"

"You are very kind. Are you quite sure we are not making a disagreeable intrusion? We might return to the hotel. I am such a stranger here, — I never was in the house but once."

"Oh, no, no," protests Mrs. Halford. Then the trunks are brought in and carried up-stairs, and the hackman goes his way.

Mr. Bradley meanwhile rises and strolls around to the end of the house. It is just as it was nearly fifty years ago. The old memories of youth come crowding back upon him. He was the heir to all this, and no one has the right to dispute him now.

"You mentioned some one that I suppose I ought to see," begins Jasper. "Is there — was there a will?"

"No; none has ever been found. And now it is going on two years. Mr. Sayre is the administrator. The estate *was divided in four equal parts*. There was a great deal of *personal property*."

Mrs. Halford feels that it is her duty to communicate the facts thus far.

"Are we the last claimants?"

"There is one more." She briefly explains her own family connection with Perdita Cope, who usually goes by their name. "The heirs of the eldest married sister, Mrs. Winterburne, are still to be traced. We can send for Mr. Sayre if you prefer. He is quite a frequent visitor," she says.

Even as she speaks, the figure of an equestrian comes in sight. Cynthia springs up and hurries down a few paces.

"Let me be the first to tell the news," she cries gayly.

"Oh, have you seen him?" Mr. Sayre smiles good-naturedly down upon her. "I had half a mind to ask him up, but I thought I would wait for him to present his credentials. Several of them have never put in any second appearance."

"He! Who?" Cynthia looks mystified.

"The Winterburne claimant."

"Oh! She laughs amusedly. "And the Bradleys are here, a father and son."

Mr. Sayre's gravest business expression settles in every line of his face. He looks at the handsome young man on the porch — there is a great contrast between him and Winterburne, and he inclines to the latter, for some inexplicable reason.

"That is Mr. Sayre," announces Mrs. Halford. "He has come most opportunely. You can have the parlor to yourselves and talk business as comfortably as in Mr. Sayre's office."

"You certainly are very kind." Jasper has decided to like the Halfords. The old house will be the pleasanter for their society. He has been running it over in his mind — he and his father will take the new part and have a housekeeper; it is best that they should be by themselves.

Mr. Sayre dismounts and fastens his sleek bay, whose *bright eyes* follow him. Then he comes up the two steps *with the utmost dignity*, and is presented to Jasper Bradley.

"And what do you think?" cries Cynthia to Regina and her mother. "The last of the happy quartet has come to light. We are now a united family until we quarrel. People always do sooner or later over money. The other one is a Mr. Winter— something."

"An odd appellation," comments Regina, half listening to the greeting between the two gentlemen.

He is explaining that his father has been very much out of health, that they have been travelling for years, been abroad and all that, and have only recently seen the notice. His father had a fancy that he would be the heir to Bradley House, "and, my dear sir," the son says, "if you will dispossess him gently of all erroneous ideas, I shall be much obliged. His illness has left him in a rather peculiar state. I will go and find him. He has started off to see everything at once."

Jasper rises and hastens down the path, around the corner of the house with a light sinuous movement that is fascinating, though in his inmost soul Mr. Sayre likens it to tight rope posturing, which he has not seen for years.

"What was the other one's name?" asks Cynthia. "How odd he should come to-day!"

"He is over at Warwick, has been there some time. Winterburne. He has his grandmother's name, and as it is rather unusual, I have no cause to doubt the young man. He was extremely straightforward, business-like."

"Handsome?" demands Cynthia.

"I can't say that he was. But he is a fine, stalwart fellow, quite different from this one."

"Who is handsome," says Regina. The tone of disapprobation she considers unjust, since he can know nothing about young Bradley.

"He must have taken it elsewhere. The Bradleys were rather rugged looking."

He is coming back, his arm locked in his father's. There is a certain similitude between them. It is a picture of *filial devotion*, and touches Regina keenly with *its grace and harmonious effect*.

Mrs. Halford proposes that they shall take one of the rooms for their necessary consultation. Cynthia and Perdita are full of wonders and unanswerable questions, and presently gather up their work and retire up-stairs. There will be some errands down in town, the mail to get, and two or three calls Perdita has promised. They know Regina will prefer to keep their mother company in this unlooked-for emergency.

Mrs. Halford and her daughter gossip in a fragmentary manner about the outcome of all this.

"They will not need to disturb us — two men only," says Mrs. Halford. "I have come to feel so at home here, though at first it *was* lonely. And I would much rather have some one in the other part. How odd if this Mr. Winterburne should want to come here, too!"

She laughs softly at her conceit.

"Some of them may be married," suggests Regina. "Mr. Bradley is not, evidently. And how devoted to his father! You seldom see such attention in a young man."

Then they are quiet, not because they are curious to listen, as they could not distinguish words at this distance, but they do hear a shrill, querulous voice, rising higher, almost to anger. Perhaps both wonder a little if this delicate, invalided gentleman will prove a pleasant companion. Of course they are not compelled to remain. Regina feels that they have established their standing, and do not need the prestige of the old house. Yet she has learned to love it in a peculiar manner. The many beautiful haunts that enchant her, the great trees that have come to have a confidential aspect as she lingers in their shade, as if the wind rustling among the leaves were instinct with old remembrances, if one had the key to translate it all.

The gentlemen are in consultation an hour or more. They have proved their claim beyond any question. Mr. Bradley has childishly insisted that every dollar going to other heirs defrauds him, that there must have been a will, either destroyed or not yet found.

"It would have been no object to me," replies Mr. Sayre decisively. "The house was searched over and over, before the heirs were advertised for. It makes no difference to a soul in Beverly whether the property goes to one person or to four. And though I have come to hold the Halford family in high esteem, there was a time when they were utter strangers to me, when I could have had no sort of preference. If you desired to have things different you should have come years before, while your uncle and aunt were alive. Remember it is the law of the State, and not I, that is answerable for the division."

"I did come," Morton Bradley says with a kind of white passion in his face that makes it quiver. "I can't remember" — he glances piteously at his son.

"You will pardon him," the low voice entreats. "He has been ill so long. He has not yet regained his usual strength, and the death of my mother was a great blow. He goes back to the old times and expectations, but he will presently accustom himself to the new order of things. And indeed he had almost forgotten there was anything — I did not suppose there was much beside the house and farm" —

Something in the son's manner goes far toward weakening the lawyer's first prejudice. He feels there is some mystery, and perhaps Morton Bradley's past will not bear strict scrutiny. That, however, has nothing to do with the present matter, and it would be unjust to punish the son for his father's misdeeds.

"You will have the first chance to purchase Bradley House," the lawyer says. "Two heirs have already agreed to this, and the other will not require much persuasion. So that can be settled at your own pleasure."

"There is no need of an immediate decision," returns the young man. "As my father's health improves he will doubtless see things in their proper light. Coming back to the old place may be of great benefit to him. We were talking of the other part — could we inspect it under your guidance?"

"Certainly, certainly. I will ask Mrs. Halford for the keys;" and he goes on his errand.

From these rooms they emerge on a short cross hall the door of which is securely bolted. It opens on the larger one, and admits them to the rooms, which are spacious, with a kitchen at the end. Up-stairs there are four, the back room being divided. There is an odd little nest in the tower, from which one has a magnificent view. Certainly Bradley House is not to be despised.

The furniture has been mostly taken out. Much of it belonged to young Mrs. Bradley, who removed it at her second marriage. But the sun shines in with softened lights, the trees glint and gleam where it touches them, and it can be restored to a very homelike place. The wide chimneys with their high mantels look odd to the young man. Down-stairs in the best room there is some tiling and a Franklin set in the fireplace. There are quaint corner seats, one carved cupboard in oak that is almost black with age. In the other room there is one not unlike an immense sideboard with tiers of shelves above the closet part. This is of mahogany and elaborately ornamented. For all the May warmth and sunshine it is chilly, and they are glad to go out on the end porch. When the Halfords first came this part had grown up almost to a wilderness, but it has felt the renovating hand of order and neatness.

"Yes," the young man says — he has been rather silent, revolving several points, "yes, one can make it very pleasant and comfortable. Then if one could find a good, trusty woman for housekeeper" —

"That will not be difficult."

"And you believe Mrs. Halford will not object to neighbors? I think I can promise that we will not trouble her greatly, after we are once settled."

"You must consult with her."

Jasper nods, with a soft half smile. They decide to follow the path around to the porch, and Mr. Sayre retraces his steps to bar and bolt. Then they rejoin Mrs. Halford

and her daughter, and the matter undergoes a friendly discussion. Mr. Bradley has fallen into an absent mood. His eyes wander out into the far distance. Is he recalling his wilful boyhood, his wasted manhood, and all the years between? He agrees to his son's plans. It does not seem as if he could have been so fierce but a brief while ago.

They decide to accept Mrs. Halford's hospitality while their part is being made habitable, and Jasper will come down to the lawyer's office in the morning.

After he is gone, the conversation starts quite briskly on the subject of relationship. The elder Mr. Bradley rouses himself and recalls many entertaining incidents he has heard from Aunt Joanna concerning the early years of her sisters, and her regrets at their apparently unwise marriages.

"But my own mother's life and Aunt Margaret's were very happy, I am sure," says Mrs. Halford, with a little protest. "They were not rich, but they took great comfort in their husbands and their children. There are so few of us left now," and she sighs gently. "I think we ought to cling together, since fate, or fortune, has so befriended us."

Then they speculate upon what the other cousin will be like; Cynthia and Perdita in their merry, audacious fashion, until something like jealousy stirs in Jasper Bradley's blood. He is quite sure he shall dislike him.

CHAPTER VII

A FAMILY CIRCLE

He who has hope has everything. — *Arabian Proverb.*

REGINA HALFORD is curiously, deeply interested in her new-found second cousin. He is so different from any person she has ever met. If there is a drawback to Beverly it is the similarity of its people, especially the young men who are in a regretted minority. They stray off to busier towns, or they are on the wing pleasure seeking. This young man is a continual study. He must have travelled, he seems to know so much about other cities. He has been abroad — he speaks several languages. At times, he seems like a foreigner himself, with his air of mystery, his puzzling ways and beliefs. He is certainly fascinating in his grace and ease and harmonious beauty. But he makes her think of the myth of Ganymede, or the story of Antinous. Then he drops these semblances, and is a busy workman, a painter, a gardener, almost a housekeeper.

The work goes on as if by magic. He has spent one day in the city selecting materials, and arranges them with a deftness and rapidity that is surprising. He has also exhumed from the "rubbish" numberless articles that are transformed out of likeness with their former selves, or polished up to some new beauty of their own. The parlor and dining-room may be somewhat *bizarre*, but they have fine artistic points. Up-stairs he has two of the smaller rooms, one a sleeping chamber, the other a "den." His father is to have the large one.

"There will be books and pictures by and by," he says *airily*. "They are things one cannot select in a hurry."

It seems very odd at first to have these strangers around,

relatives though they are. At times the elder Mr. Bradley is captious and unreasonable.

"A little of him goes a good ways on such an occasion," declares Cynthia. "He is like a wasp, insisting that the ceiling must yawn somewhere for his escape, when there is a window open. And how patient his son is at these trying moments! It makes me quite adore him."

Jasper is very good-natured about assisting them in small matters. He has re-hung pictures, and suggested some changes that really are an improvement to the rooms. He has taken strolls with them; he has a wonderful eye for beauty. The housekeeper, a tidy, middle-aged, stolid sort of woman, a stranger to Beverly, keeps them clean and luxuriously fed, and does not object to watch Mr. Bradley when his son is away on brief excursions. He has explained that his father was so crushed by his mother's death, nearly four years ago, that he has been more or less ailing since, and in a sad, nervous state. They are all extremely sympathetic. It hardly seems possible that in ten days or so one could become interested in strangers. Of course, there is something in the relationship that paves the way for friendliness.

One evening he brings out his violin. His playing is simply marvellous. Certainly it does not sound the touch of an amateur, it stirs *one* to the innermost depths, and seems to waft her to some country seen vaguely in dreams, and recurring with inexplicable persistency. Those bright, tremulous, mysterious sounds, rising importunately, swelling, melting, falling into a slow, tender, persuasive movement, flooding the soft evening air with so wondrous a melody that her soul surges and throbs, makes her feel capable of the keenest suffering, the most exquisite joy, and then trailing off into dim, unknown spaces that she is almost afraid to penetrate.

"Oh," cries Perdita with a long, long sigh, "do not stop! I could listen forever!"

This is the state matters have reached when Mr. Sayre comes up again late one afternoon with another visitor, the

last of the group of relatives. They are all out on the porch except Mr. Bradley, who is still lounging on his sofa in the quiet of his own room.

"This is Mr. Winterburne," announces the lawyer. "He proposed to wait for your permission to pay his respects to you under a different name, but I knew that would not be at all to his detriment."

"Oh," and Cynthia springs forward with an exclamation of delight. "Mr. Hilliard! Of course we are glad to see you! Wonders will never cease. The Bradley fortune is as good as a play, or a serial story. In every chapter another mystery is unfolded. But why did you never tell us" —

"How could I guess?" He is shaking hands with Mrs. Halford, who shows her pleasure in her friendly smiles. Regina is last — she stands up, taller than ever, it seems, and with an indescribable expression hovering about her face, which certainly is not delight. There is a rising color, too, not the fascinating tint of unalloyed joy.

He feels it at once. One would hardly expect so much sensitiveness in this great, hearty fellow. Still — their last meeting — their parting.

"Why, I never dreamed of such a thing. We had not kept up with my grandmother's relatives — I don't think any of them ever made any overtures. When Mr. Hilliard married my mother, he insisted on my having his name. And to think we should have known each other half a year or more, and never even had a presentiment! Mrs. Halford, don't I carry any of the family marks?"

He turns his face to her that Regina may recover — is it awkwardness, or that sense of embarrassment at the old remembrance? For now, though his love is still intact in his soul, and leaps up in a flame at the sight of her, all the man's instincts are generous. She may study him in a new light, and he — just the mere sight of her again fills him with happiness.

It is not at all as he thinks. The love he hopes to win has not yet been awakened in her soul. He brings back to

her, without a moment's warning, the old life she has buried, put out of sight, that she desires to forget utterly, that strait of poverty and anxiety, when she even descended to a thought of marriage, that will always be an abhorrence to her! And how can she forget with him here? It is an unreasonable sense of anger against him, that she feels is unjust, and yet she desires to cling to it.

He and his cousin Bradley shake hands. He seldom thinks of personal attractiveness in a man, but he feels instantly at a disadvantage. There is a strange beauty about this man that affects him, and then he remembers the incident at the station. He pays him an involuntary respect, as he feels that he ought to make amends for a little prejudice that had its birth then, that even now protests against the almost feminine softness. He would not be here, rounding out the family circle, if they had not discerned some virtue in him. The curious desire to approve of what Miss Halford may approve, to make no jarring or discord in the beginning, is strong upon him, and stirs the generous side of his nature. He really knows nothing about this new relative save that he treated his father with a most tender respect.

"Are we all together now?" inquires Cynthia with her pretty audacity. "Mr. Sayre, are you quite sure the family circle will not be increased and the fortune divided and subdivided? Because it would be cruel to let us dream in our fancied security, and then announce the disheartening fact."

"The family records are reliable, I believe," he returns gravely. "We have accounted for every member of the older family."

"Have you any brothers or sisters, Mr. —, are we to say Mr. Winterburne?"

"Since I have to come back to my true name for legal purposes, I shall use it, without dropping the other. No, Miss Cynthia, as to relatives, except in this way,—my mother married a second time, and I have a half-sister."

"Then you and Cousin Jasper and Perdita are the sole

heirs of your father's or mother's houses? It's rather confusing, you see. But I believe I would rather have Regina and half a share."

Winterburne smiles softly. He would relinquish all his share, and his dreams so dear to him, for Regina, but he cannot say so, and therein fate mocks him.

Mrs. Halford is much interested in learning his story, and plies him with questions in her gentle, amiable way. It is like the return of an old friend who is never to go very far away again. She has a sudden accession of safety that the Bradleys have not afforded her, though she feels motherly toward Jasper. He brings up his wanderings at Warwick. Cynthia exclaims in her irrepressible fashion,—

"Why, that is only a short distance! And you have been there three months!" upbraidingly.

"I came first in January. My friend there has an interest in some iron works, and after a little consideration I resolved to embark with him. There was an experiment that I wanted to try, and now I shall be in circumstances to do it. So you may consider me a fixture at Warwick for years to come, mayhap until I am a millionaire," and he laughs lightly.

Mr. Sayre shakes his head. "There is more money lost than made in iron in this part of the world."

"But we have — some new ideas. And now let us discuss the iron property," he goes on with a sudden change of tone, a kind of business briskness. "Mr. Sayre tells me there is some land for sale, — that proved vexatious to Mr. Bradley years ago. If we can make the right arrangement, I should like to purchase it."

Jasper Bradley bends slightly forward, and gives a glance of quick scrutiny toward Winterburne. The magic word *millionnaire* has been surging in his brain.

"There are only the two pieces of real estate, as you all know," begins Mr. Sayre. "We have decided that Mr. Bradley is to have the first choice of this," indicating the *house with a slight inclination of the head*. "There is the *tract at Hazens*" —

"What sort of mines are there on it?" asks Jasper quietly.

"Two that were worked at one time with considerable profit. Then they gave out. Mr. Bradley, meanwhile, had sold them, but the company became discouraged, and lapsed in payments. About the first business I did for him was to foreclose. There were several contested points, I remember, but it was finally settled. Then he put it in a broker's hands, and we had it nearly disposed of, when the parties backed out. I should advise you all to sell."

Mr. Sayre utters this in a tone of decision.

"Where is it situated?"

"Some miles below Warwick, off the railroad, to the east. It belonged once to a large tract of mineral land that for the last fifty years has been known as Hazens. It is good for nothing as farming land, never will be."

"You must know best," Jasper replies modestly. "All of us are strangers, and then I am ignorant of the value of such property. You wished to purchase it outright?" to Winterburne. "Perhaps you have had some expert's opinion?"

The tone has in it a suavity that seems innocent enough, but it somehow touches Winterburne.

"No," almost bluntly. "The company are purchasing mining property. They have a new process of treating ores which may be a success. They have a smelting-furnace at Warwick. And the property adjoining has been taken at a valuation satisfactory to the former owners."

He has explained all this to Mr. Sayre, and does not go into particulars.

"How long a time have we for consideration? You know, I suppose, that it is my father, and not I alone who is to consent?"

"They would like an answer as soon as convenient; the sooner the better for them."

"And the ladies" —

"I shall take Mr. Sayre's advice," says Mrs. Halford in *her usual gentle tone*.

"Well, it is best to get this settled. The other matter there need be no hurry about. And now, having done my duty, and established amicable relations, I shall have to wish you a good-evening. As soon as you have reached a decision, will you let me know?"

This seems more particularly addressed to Jasper Bradley.

Winterburne rises as well as the lawyer.

"Oh," cries Cynthia, "there is no need of your going. Why, we have not half talked over old times, nor our surprise at finding ourselves related. And have you no curiosity to see the home of your ancestors?"

She glances at him with such a piquant sense of astonishment that he smiles.

Mrs. Halford comes forward.

"Yes, stay," she pleads with a soft persuasiveness. "Stay and have a cup of tea with us. And there will be time for a walk about the grounds. There are some very fine views."

He glances toward Regina, but she has turned her face a trifle aside, and now answers some remark of Bradley's.

"Of course he will remain," says Mr. Sayre, who again wishes them good-evening.

"When can I get back to Warwick? There is a train at seven" —

"And one at nine. Surely that will be early enough."

He resumes his seat, and now the conversation takes a lighter turn. They are all giving him a friendly welcome but Regina. Is she afraid he will presume? She has changed mysteriously. She certainly is beautiful in this soft white gown that falls around her feet in a billowy manner, and defines her lithesome form. Her hands lie idly in her lap, her whole air is one of repose. Nothing in this meeting has touched her, touched any chord of finer sympathy.

How it comes, he cannot tell, but something intangible influences him in spite of himself, deprives him of his usual *easy demeanor*, and gives him a very slight feeling of suffer-

ing by contrast with Jasper Bradley; a sense of awkwardness, as if he was not quite of the same world with that young man and Miss Halford. After all, is he? Has she not gone beyond the girl he has known and watched in her plain gown, and with her anxious face? She need not be anxious now, thank Heaven! and he is glad, even if she has drifted away from him. Oh, was she near? Was it anything more than a reflection of his own love, his ardent wishes, making a rose-tinted atmosphere of hope!

Mrs. Halford begins to excuse herself, pleading household cares.

"No," exclaims Regina rising. "I will see to the supper. Sit still and enjoy the talk."

She presses her hand lightly on her mother's shoulder, smiles down into the placid face, and goes gently, the white train following her like a meandering stream. Jasper draws his chair nearer. The devotion of these three women to Winterburne rather piques him, since he has been used to all the attention. He begins to feel a little jealous, and these are the only relatives he has ever known, the only people on whom he has a sympathetic claim.

Mrs. Halford has an old-fashioned, womanly charm. There is a delicacy about her that one associates with high breeding, and a desire to have things pleasant for every one. She has been so accustomed to smoothing down the thorns she could not take out of her children's path, that it has given her a fine tact in certain lines, or what would appear so to others, but it is simply a love of harmonious adjustment. In her gentle way she seems to uphold the securities of household life, and give them a sacredness. You could never think of her as being anything but the centre of a cheerful living. She has none of the dissatisfactions that create reforms, or the ambitions that evolve new paths. Her soft lavender gray gown seems a part of her. Even the new accession of wealth and comfort are toned to the every-day using, as if it had always been so.

Winterburne *seems in a sort of haze*, as if he had dreamed *that old life and was not yet clearly awake*. The money is

likely to make such a great difference with him that he feels like a boy who throws up his cap and shouts for very delight. It certainly has made very little difference with them, unless it is Regina, who always was reticent and stately. And Jasper Bradley—he cannot place him at once. He too has an air of luxury as if life had been of the holiday sort. He tries to gauge him by his conversation, which has a wide range, and the air of being at home on all the subjects he touches. That it is a subtle, elusive flavor he cannot tell at present, his own experience is not wide enough for such discrimination. He has learned, too, that it is only extremely shallow natures that can be weighed and measured at a first interview.

Cynthia questions him about Warwick. They have not yet visited that place in their journeyings about, which have been largely governed by Regina's tastes, and she is not interested in fields of labor at present. It is an ugly, sooty, noisy town with swarms of children and men who are continually making disturbances of some sort. They have been to inspect the great smelting-furnace at Staunton, the railroad shops, the steel processes, the big machine works, and that has satisfied their slight interest in such matters.

"And you are really going to live there?" Cynthia asks with bright eyed interest.

"Yes; I have a pretty cottage in view. My sister is anxious to rejoin me; it is two years since we have really lived together, though I go home as often as I can. There are only the two of us"—

"There will be more now. You cannot throw us over if the old adage holds true, that blood is thicker than water. And what is your sister like?"

"Cynthia," murmurs the mother in tender reproof.

"O mother dear! Mr. Hilliard need not tell us of her faults. How pretty the old name sounds," and she gives a short laugh, thinking of the winter when they first met him. "Is she tall or short, fair or dark, and has she a *mission*? So many Eastern women have, you know, and *I think a hobby* must be interesting, if you believe in it with *all your soul*."

"Have you not taken up one?" and he smiles rather amusedly.

"No; life has been too smooth. There must be some angles, some salient points, or a woman must have a strong desire for a career. And I haven't any genius."

She utters this very simply. Honesty is a part of her nature.

"I do not know as my sister has what you would call genius," he says tentatively.

"Oh, then she has something. Come, that is interesting."

Cynthia raises her eyes in expectation. Such a little more would make them languishing, but her frank face interferes with much sentiment.

"She has a talent for designing, illustrating; she can make the most expressive faces; she has a vein of broad comicality, which she hates, for she is a rather intense person, and life has been sad enough to her. I cannot understand how you come by qualities and aptitudes that you cannot approve of even to yourself—I do not mean faults, in this instance."

"Why has life been so sad to her? It seems to me that you would not let circumstances jar and grind any one in your care."

"Thank you." The kindly estimate touches him keenly, though she has not intended it for compliment.

"It was something that no one could help after it once happened. She slipped down-stairs one day at school. There was an eager crowd behind her, all were hurrying. She was picked up with a broken leg, and in due course of time recovered. Afterward there came some trouble in her hip. Perhaps if it had been looked after early enough—but when it was taken in hand it was too late to do anything beyond causing months of intense suffering. She accepted her misfortune with a good deal of bravery," and his tone drops to a sympathetic sweetness. "By the time she was eighteen her lot was decided, and she set about making the best of it. Her father died. There was a little money, and after a while, in trying to amuse herself,

she found out her gift. She had a teacher and perfected herself in the technicalities of the art, and illustrated a child's story so acceptably, that it was taken, and with it a most kindly proffer for future work. We kept house together; but business has taken me away, though she is in good hands and friends come at intervals to stay with her. And now there is a prospect of our being settled again."

"What a pathetic story!" cries Perdita, whose fancy responds quickly to the unusual, and her sympathies go out to misfortune. With a little shiver she gives thanks that she is sound, that no evil has befallen her.

"Is she very" — how shall she frame her inquiry.

He understands.

"She is very lame occasionally. The joint was weakened by an operation, which, after all, *was* for the best. She never feels quite safe without her crutch. But she goes about the house, and sometimes one would hardly remark it. She is as tall as your sister, and is not ungraceful. She is very fair, with light hair, — flaxen, I think it would be called."

"I want to see her," exclaimed Cynthia with interest.

"You will not forget when you are settled?"

"Mr. Winterburne can bring her here," says Mrs. Halford, her motherly heart in a tender glow. "We shall be glad to meet her, and will make her comfortable."

"The house is capacious, the out-of-doors boundless, and it is all delightful," subjoins Perdita enthusiastically.

"How good you all are!" he replies warmly.

At that juncture Regina appears with the announcement that supper is ready. The Beverly people eschew tea-bells as savoring too much of boarding-houses. Regina's instincts incline to invitations as well.

She has heard the last, and there is a slight crease of dissatisfaction on her fair brow. Does fate mean to bring him nearer all the time?

Jasper quietly excuses himself. He must look after his *father*.

"Yes," says Regina; "let us have the family all together. We will wait until you go for him."

Jasper runs lightly up the stairs. His father still lies on the sofa, his wrinkled face pallid, his lips a bluish purple, his eyes not quite closed. He breathes regularly, but the son knows it is not the normal sleep of health. "Poor father," he murmurs, "one cannot altogether blame him. And it comes in opportunely now. He and Winterburne would be sure to stumble upon some point of dissension. I want to learn more about the young man."

He gently excuses him as not feeling very well, and they all go in to supper. But when they are seated, and the repast begins, the atmosphere has changed again. Winterburne has at first a rather smothered sensation, as if the room were too warm; he is quite sure his face is flushed, and he knows it has been sun and wind burned. He glances over at Bradley, who is so delicately fair and refined, who is slim and graceful as Regina herself, and he feels overgrown, bulky, and at a disadvantage, as before. Jasper seems to have started into a vein of light badinage with the girls that somehow shuts him out, since, no matter how ridiculous the argument may be, he appeals to both Mrs. Halford and Regina, as if he had long ago established his claim. Winterburne has had so little call for the airy nothings that make conversation brilliant, that he is utterly at loss. As the ball is tossed to and fro, he misses it, and finally makes no attempt to snatch at its sparkling edge.

Regina is watching him carelessly. She can formulate objections now that she felt but vaguely before. The man does not come up to her standard. She has a right to raise it now, but it is not in reality any higher than it was then. She is just the same self. She was simply out of her normal sphere; she is in it at present, and that is all the difference.

Winterburne glances at her occasionally, when, by some sure instinct, he feels that her eyes are turned a little away. *The honest gentleman* is sadly puzzled. *Where has he made the mistake?* Not in fancying her the guard-

ian angel of a few rooms or a simple cottage — from the first, he has placed her on a pedestal, and desired wealth for her sake, for his own he is quite indifferent. His few straits and pinches have been rather amusing, since his strong hands could soon extricate himself. He has never thought of wanting her to share them. He has quite as an unorthodox opinion of the uses of adversity as Cynthia. One man has the will and the courage to buffet across the adverse torrent, and the world is never weary of shouting over his success; but of the hundreds whose weak hands are dashed down, who hears, except in pity or derision!

When the supper is ended they all go out of doors and stroll around. Jasper draws Mrs. Halford's hand within his arm, cutting off that refuge, for he feels now that Regina will be merely polite. In a certain way he reads the stately young girl, who would passionately protest at the rendering if she knew it. The tall trees cast long twilight shadows about. The sun has dropped down behind the farther mountain. The more vivid tints have merged into soft rose color with the intermingling pale greens and blues that deepen into purple or fade to a gray lavender. How wonderfully still it all seems, though birds are calling to truant mates, and swallows make wide circles above their heads. Insect time had not yet come, when the grass and the hollows would be alive with voices. The leaves rustled softly, the pines shook out resinous odors distilled with the dew, and the pungent wild-grape bloom scented the air.

"I don't wonder you like it so much," Winterburne exclaims presently with deep feeling. "It is a grand old place. And to think of one's forefathers having lived here, rambling about as we are doing now, planning futures, enjoying the days, counting up all the treasures of the years, and then falling peacefully asleep, and the newer, younger hands taking up the work where they left off. It is like an idyl."

"*It has made you romantic,*" and Cynthia glances up *into the eyes of bluish darkness.* "Men care for places,

do they not? And women for ancestors;" she laughs; "at least, Regina does. And I do not care for either. I am what I am, so long as, like St. Patrick, 'I come of decent people.' But what any one is to do with all the years puzzles me. When I am through school, which will be next month, I am to take up the small, sweet duties," — there is a mocking strand in her voice, — "make calls, and receive them, ride, walk, talk, do fancy work, pet up some flowers, compare and discuss bulbs and the best kind of soil for roses, go out to tea, to excursions up the mountains, to pretty evening dances, sails on the river, and after one has done it for years, one must tire of it, don't you see?"

"Of course it would tire me immensely." Winterburne laughs at the idea.

"I don't believe it would tire Cousin Bradley or Regina," she makes answer. "You can't think what a sort of aristocrat Regina has grown. I am not sure but she always was one in certain ways. And yet I am rather disappointed," admits this frank young woman. "I used to feel that if Regina had the opportunity she would be something grand, — I don't just know what, — and, instead, she is full of little quips and quirks as to what is proper, what is admissible, what is not to be allowed under any circumstances. I shall be a trial to her, a thorn in the flesh, a discord in the music. For you must know that Beverly has been toned down to the smoothest harmony. It is like being in a dream, and wondering when the day will break, and the real work of life begin."

"You all like Bradley?" he assumes, rather anxiously. Has *he* influenced Regina so soon?

"Well — yes. Perdita here goes crazy when he plays the violin. I do not believe you ever heard anything like it. I think he is keyed in a certain harmony with Regina, — can you understand that? There are a great many points of accord."

It hurts him to hear it. "And what of the elder Mr. Bradley?"

"He is charming at times, queer at others, and has been a little wandering in his mind. Do you know, I think he is rather afraid of Regina, and yet she is always gentle to him. They are very picturesque, and seem to belong to Bradley House. We are the tenants at will, and shall remain as long as Regina wills. But I want to see your sister; she may be a breath of fresh air from out beyond."

"You shall see her," he promises.

CHAPTER VIII

FOR HER SAKE

"O sweet fond dream of human love!"

THEY wander to the edge of the woods, a great belt of timber that runs over for the next half mile, when it is broken by an abrupt ledge of rock that rises irregularly, leaving suggestive vistas between. The valleys are all in a violet haze, the yellow twilight is taking on more sombre tints. The stars have come out, and look wonderfully large and golden, since there is no moon till past midnight. The country in its weird evening silence impresses him with its sense of immutability that the seasons may affect, but never alter. He seems now to understand why Silas Bradley went on so calmly year after year, and desired no change.

He hardly notes the chatter of the girls until Cynthia declares they have gone far enough, unless they mean to go over the other side and greet the sunrise. As they retrace their steps, they can see the town growing ghostly in the swift falling darkness.

Jasper and Regina are coming to meet them. He can almost feel the flowing grace of their movements, and it is like the faint cadence of a past strain of music, suggesting to that nervous inner sense their walking through life together.

"If you mean to take that train," — Jasper begins suggestively. "Not but that all the members of the family can be accommodated under the roof-tree. We are blossoming out into a hitherto unknown virtue — hospitality. Mrs. Halford has regenerated the old house."

There is a curious quality in the voice that stirs Winter-

burne's resentment, as if this young Apollo could easily make a mock of all things.

"I do mean to take it," is the incisive reply. "I think we will have just time for good-nights."

Regina colors almost angrily. Does he mean to suggest that other good-night?

"I suppose we shall see you often," says Cynthia, "we shall be so near. And you will not forget about your sister?"

"Oh, no." Yet he wishes Regina would speak.

When they come within the soft yellow-red rays of lamp-light that stream out on the porch he glances at her. She is so stately and beautiful; yes, she *has* grown out of the old life, but *he* cannot give it up.

"If you wouldn't mind my walking down with you" — Jasper says persuasively.

He does mind it a little, for he cannot dismiss a certain distrust. Yet he is sincerely anxious to prove it unfounded. He wants to know more about this relative who at the first glimpse affected him so curiously, and to divine what qualities in him so attract Miss Halford.

"Yes," he says, "come with me." That is honest surely.

The parting is cordial with earnest invitations to come again. The two young men wind down the avenue, and are soon lost to sight in the darkness. The two girls chatter eagerly.

"You know I always did like him," declares Cynthia, "and a cousin is such a friendly sort of relation. He wouldn't dare to find fault and criticise as a brother or a husband does, and if you do not like his ways you are free to amend them by good advice."

"An amusingly illogical partnership," comments Regina. "Have you decided to take him in hand?"

"Wait till Miss Hilliard comes. I have a feeling that — that no one will be at liberty to take him in hand. I *think* he belongs to her."

Why that should please Regina, the girl does not stop

to consider. She is an invalid — she is not blest with a fortune, and he is doubtless devoted to her. He grows less objectionable for a moment. But there is his association with the old life. She wishes from the depths of her heart that they could begin anew here. She listens interestedly to the talk about Miss Hilliard.

The two men meanwhile go on in silence. Winterburne seldom finds any difficulty in talking to his own sex, but he feels quite at loss with this unknown personality beside him. Presently he manages a lame remark.

"Your father is quite an invalid."

"Yes. Horribly shattered nerves; though I think his general health will improve in this bracing air. And there is some occult charm in coming back to the home of your childhood, manhood; the place, in fact, where you have really expected to end your days."

He will take Bradley House, of course. That is right enough.

"You are considering the property Mr. Sayre spoke of?" Jasper says before Winterburne has formulated his next remark, which he has intended should be approval.

"The company has been considering it. To-day — I don't know just what took possession of me suddenly, — I made an individual offer, if the company should not object."

"You think it valuable?"

"Well, that was not quite the reason."

"But you expect to find iron, the lost veins perhaps. I have heard of such things."

"It isn't quite like gold mining," says Winterburne. "Of course the iron is there. You can hardly go amiss of it in these regions. Much of it, however, would not be worth working under the old processes."

"And you have something new?" he asserts with a jarring eagerness. "Couldn't other parties use it?"

"Not at present." Winterburne gives an amused little laugh.

"Then it is *your* secret?" He hazards the guess.

"Well—yes, it is *my* secret. I have spent all my money thus far trying experiments, and I should be a fool not to protect it. An opportunity came to me to use it. The sequel of many inventions has been that they were superseded by something better or less expensive, so a sensible man strikes while the iron is hot,—a capital old adage. And my share of the estate puts me in a more fortunate position. I am extremely thankful for it. So I have ventured upon the fancy of making a bid for this little bit of the estate. It will make no difference in one way to the company: we shall work it all the same."

"Suppose you find other and more profitable veins?"

"We may do that anywhere, you see. The company has bought the tract below, which is thought to be very rich in ore."

"In this case the gain would be yours?" There is something brief and business-like in these questions, and Winterburne wonders if this young fellow does not know more than he allows to appear on the surface.

"Yes, the profit would be more largely mine, of course, and the risk corresponding. An expert has gone over it all, and I should not feel so free to overbid the company if the verdict had been altogether in its favor. One mine is about worked out. You see, when the land was sold before, the times were extremely prosperous. You could make money almost anywhere. They were golden days. But the owner finally lost all he put into it, when business dropped down, and left it in disgust to revert to its former owner. Now we are down to very hard pan. The company will not give the old price, and it may be years before another purchaser comes along. I am foolish enough to overbid them, and go up to the olden figure. It may be my gain, as you suggest, or a bad bargain. I take the risk. It is a sudden decision with me."

Winterburne is very frank, quite unlike his usual business reticence. But he wants this young man to understand distinctly that he is going at no underhand work. His opinion will no doubt influence the others.

"If this were leased instead?" he suggests.

"The estate will have to find a lessee, and then trust to his assiduity in working it. The money will be of more real service to the heirs;" and there is a dryness in his tone that the other notes, but is loath to interpret rightly.

"I wonder if I should be considered impertinent if I came over—say to-morrow morning," he suggests in the pleading tone of asking a favor. "Not that I expect to interfere with any of your plans. I haven't any head or any love for business. But I might enlarge my ideas a little, and not seem quite such an ignoramus to the ladies after they have listened to wiser people."

He gives his soft mellifluous laugh, that somehow rings untrue to Winterburne.

"Oh, come over, certainly," he returns. The aspect of Hazens is by no means rose color; indeed, it would disenchant the lover of beautiful scenery. "I want you and the Halfords to feel that I shall take no undue advantage at any point." There is an incisiveness in his tone that savors almost of displeasure.

"Oh, I don't doubt your fairness, please keep that in mind," says Bradley with a soft, wounded accent that touches the other curiously. "If you outbid the company or any one else who would like it, you do all the most exigent person could ask. And since we are relatives, we should be friends as well, especially as we are to be at no great distance from each other."

The nearness is the least pleasant thing about the matter. Winterburne would like to shake him off. When he does not admire or approve, if he can follow the bent of his inclination, he wants to dismiss the obnoxious person and have no further dealings with him. He can discern no real ground for his unreason, and that frets him the more since all his impulses are broadly generous. Is he jealous that Jasper Bradley is brought into such familiar intercourse with the Bradleys, that they are all on one side with leisure, music, intellectual enjoyments, and he on quite another round?

And Regina! He has been sorely puzzled this evening. Has she purposely made the distance so wide between them? Is it her fine feeling of honor that will not lead one to a false hope? Does she mean to show him the gulf between is too wide, too full of intricate turns and delicate indescribable aspects, for him to cross over to her? Why it is he cannot tell—it is one of those profound mysteries that are solved only when people come soul to soul in a great crisis, and all the subterfuges are swept away; but he has an insistent conviction that she is the other part of his soul, without which his whole life will be one of the flawed and imperfect ones. Why he should love her has only one unsatisfactory answer: he does, he always shall. Even if he never tastes the divine draught, and goes his way prospering and outwardly at peace, for it will not ruin him physically or materially, he is too well balanced for that: no other joy can compensate.

They are going through the town now. It is so pretty with its lights, its cosy interiors veiled by shadowy draperies, toned by violets and soft yellows or the seductive haze of a rose tint over the flame of some rather garish lamp. Young people are sauntering through the streets, talking low, laughing softly, with well-trained voices. It is so harmonious. The ease and refinement touch him. There are faint sounds of music that stir his inmost being and intensify his love of beauty, his appreciation of the blessings that wealth and artistic culture can call into existence.

How Alice would like it all! Her glimpses of the world at large have been so entertaining. Has he not made a mistake after all in wanting to identify himself with such a town as Warwick? Can he do anything commensurate with the sacrifice? Matters *have* changed with him. He might come nearer Regina with the halo of luxury! No, he will not prove a traitor to the cause he has taken up.

The agile patter of steps beside him comes uppermost *again*, and rasps him unreasonably, as if he were a nervous woman. Is there some fine antagonism between him and

Bradley? Then he takes himself resolutely in hand. He will not be churlish at the outset.

"What a lovely old town! And the night" — he pauses abruptly — does this young man care for Jessica and Lorenzo and —

"Such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees."

Then he recalls what they were saying a few moments ago, and continues with an abrupt change of tone, —

"Yes, you are right. There is no reason why we should not be friends, and take a kindly interest in each other. There — isn't that my train?"

It is in the distance, but comes on swiftly in its mysterious, breathless glide, and startles the air with a shrill shriek.

"I shall be on the lookout for you to-morrow morning;" and Winterburne waves the gesture of farewell without taking the other's hand. He enters, drops into his seat with a sense of fatigue, and the impression of a disagreeable mental strain that depresses him. He has such a bright temperament that this mood is unusual, especially as matters have gone so well with him of late.

"If I am not careful, Bradley will be the 'Old man of the Sea' to me," and he gives a short, unmirthful laugh in his dark corner. "If we could start fairly, I would give him some odds;" then he admits with great reluctance that after all it is not Bradley, but Regina, who has put the distance between them. She has held herself so regally aloof. Is there a subtle hint in it that this latest comer has some gift or quality that attracts? A sharp pang goes over him. He has not really thought of losing her while he has been willing to wait years. And now he is on the high road to fortune, the fortune he has desired for her. What can there be in this man that charms? Ah, he has the great gift of personal attractiveness, and he remembers that men are not always chosen for their worth, for their high *purposes* or *brave souls*. A great mystery underlies it all, and

he has only taken the first daring step. He has loved her, he must go on loving her, until by her own act she makes it a sin.

He is at the mills early the next morning. Dale is at hand, though the great bell has not yet rung. He is a small, wiry man past fifty, with a shrewd, careworn face that carries in it the marks of many struggles, so many, that success will hardly find a place to brighten.

"Well — is all right?" he asks.

"The money, you mean? Yes. I am quite a rich man this morning. I don't know when I will have so much 'tin' again, only it is a few bits of paper. When Graniss comes I want to talk over a little matter. Will it make any difference, I wonder, if I take that Bradley tract? I'd like it to touch the old notch."

"You don't mean you'd pay an extra thousand?" — and the light blue-gray eyes study him in amaze.

"Yes," answers Winterburne.

"Well — why? The land isn't worth what we agreed to give for it. I consented because — for your sake mostly, Winterburne. You heard Lindaff's estimate?"

"I have a foolish streak of sentiment, that is all. It is part of the estate, all that I can ever get hold of, and I'd like to own a bit of ground Silas Bradley left behind."

"He couldn't well take it with him," Dale chuckles. "I don't know as there's any act of Legislature to keep a man from making an ordinary fool of himself. An extraordinary one can have a guardian appointed if he wastes too much money. We shall keep a sharp eye on you, Winterburne!"

"Well, so long as you don't consider the transaction unfair. Of course we will work the mines."

"There's only one good for anything. You might open some new ones, but the Cummings tract is much more promising, Lindaff said. No, Graniss won't care."

Graniss enters presently. He is a few years younger, taller, thinner, near-sighted, and with a little stoop. He

is a rather slow, methodical man, and weighs the matter, as is his custom. Then he says gravely, —

“You’re throwing away a thousand dollars clean.”

“That’s to celebrate coming into my fortune. There’s worse blow-outs, if they do not cost as much. You are both agreed, then?”

“Glad to be let up from a bad bargain. No one’s had any real luck with it, Winterburne. Graniss — here’s to us, congratulations!” and Dale goes through the motion of clinking a glass and emptying it.

So it is with a curiously light heart that Hilliard Winterburne drives down to the station. This is a very little done for Regina’s sake, as one might present her with a rare nosegay. Bradley is there, dressed with the nicest care. Yes, he is a handsome fellow. His grace and litheness make other men clumsy. His hair is a soft brown, and seems to have golden grains sifted over it. Curiously enough, all his tints are golden. His hazel eyes have a shining gleam, his fair skin has a glint as if the sun were shining on it. The manner holds an indefinable quality — it may be birth or breeding. Winterburne wonders what his mother was like. It seems the consummation of art. There is a delicate joyousness about him, a suggestion of brilliant but wavering summer seas with the reality beneath, an unknown quality. -

They drive about Warwick. It is not a pretty town. There is no charmed South End or East End. Some streets are tolerably decent with better class cottages and pretty gardens, but the general air is that of indifference, untidiness. There is a large sawing and planing mill with great piles of logs and lumber; there are factories of various kinds, but iron is in the ascendancy. *Débris* lies about in every direction. Piles of crushed slate, hillocks of limestone, and great heaps of iron ore. Out one side is a deserted quarry that has failed in its promises. There are slag roads and walks, low places that have been filled in; long rows of *cottages*, some of them mere shanties, with *cows and pigs grazing*, and some puddles of reddish-yellow

water with ducks serenely sailing about. Some shabby churches and chapels, two schoolhouses rather dilapidated, and gin-mills with red curtains at doors and windows.

"You do not mean to live here?" Bradley cries in disgust.

"Not in the midst of this! I'm a democratic sort of fellow, but I like cleanliness and good pure air. It could be made better—I shall try and rouse some one to a view of wholesomer living. With God's pure air and sunshine all about, there is no sense in herding like cattle. I shall be over there," indicating a green and smiling vista with his head. "Out there among the farms for a while. But even that isn't Beverly."

Bradley's lip curls a little. This particular expression savors of a cruel indifference to so much of his kind as are on the strata below. He is not a man to discuss philanthropy with.

They pass some worn-out mines as they go onward toward the rocky hills. A little stream winds along in a slow, turgid fashion. It is very wild—one might fancy it a primitive wilderness but for the mining indications. The limestone in its dull, grayish white has here and there a vein of crystalline clearness, and long trails of gneiss show through at intervals, with bits of iron pyrites among the shale, glistening in the morning sun. There are glimpses of rock that seem besprinkled with gems; but the general aspect is dreary, with the stunted trees that make a brave fight for a foothold, and the scanty, dull green herbage.

They go along quietly. Jasper Bradley is most interested in nature in her holiday attire, then he does not care to waste his enthusiasm on such an auditor. The very hardness of the scenery rasps his nerves, and he wonders how any reasonable human being can ever kindle an interest in this kind of business. Perhaps Winterburne was put at it in his youth, and he has not had the pluck to *break away*. These great, brawny men are slow of brain, *coarse of nerve*, and drop easily into the ruts of labor.

"This is Hazens."

Bradley glances about the desolate country.

"It may have charms for the eye of a mineralogist" —

"And this is the Bradley tract. It is only nine acres. Here are the old mines," continues Winterburne in the pause. "Let us get out and look around."

There is some scaffolding still about the black pits, timbers gray with storm and age. The land lies a short distance from the base of a rocky ridge. There has been a spur of road out here. Some of the rusted rails and weather-beaten sleepers still remain.

"I made my proposal to the company this morning," announces Winterburne, "and the partners appeared glad at the prospect of a release. They place great reliance on the expert's opinion. Of course mine can only be termed a sentimental reason" — he gives the short half-laugh that covers little or much, as the case may be — "because it is the only part of the Bradley estate within my reach."

"You may get rich and buy us all out," the other says with a touch of disdain. "As the case stands, we are none of us suffering from a plethora of wealth."

Just then a new phase in view attracts Winterburne's far-seeing eyes. There has been a fissure in the rock weakened by the storms of years until it has given way and crashed down, dislodging everything in its course. It lies out here an immense boulder. He follows the rude channel it has made, and studies it in silence.

The volatile hope and suspicion that animated Bradley last night has died out. There may be a fortune here, but he could not wrest it from this rocky soil. Winterburne may have deep designs, but he doesn't look shrewd — as he has seen shrewdness. He can read some people — his vanity leads him astray here; indeed, his penetration is often a matter of suspicion. The smouldering grudge in his soul is that this plodding man before him may some day outbid him on the score of money. If there only had been a will, as his father sometimes obstinately insists!

Yes, he would like it all. The thousands he was so thankful for a few weeks since seem paltry now.

In a vague, half-insolent manner his eyes have been following his companion. Winterburne has picked up a ragged-edged fragment of stone and is studying it intently, clipping it with his thumb-nail, which sets Bradley's teeth on edge, holding it in certain lights, and considering gravely. Then, with it still in his hand, they saunter down to the edge of the tract.

"Dale chose this land below here," he says. "He was out in Pennsylvania for years. We are to work it as soon as we can get the road in order again. For to-day," with a pleasant little laugh, "I am an actual member of the firm. And I would like this matter settled" —

"I suppose you have made yourself master of the secrets an expert could not see," Bradley subjoins in a tone that would be insolent were it not so extremely suave. "No man would throw his money away on a blind venture."

"I may have an opinion," Winterburne says rather shortly. "Mr. Bradley bought this tract twenty years ago, and it never was a paying investment for any one. You can refuse to sell — you may influence Mrs. Halford" — it is a bitter admission, but he makes it.

"I shall not influence any one," in a soft, indescribable tone. "Mrs. Halford will consult Mr. Sayre, and he is Miss Cope's guardian. You seem to imagine that I have some power to be used against you. I should be in a wretched minority."

He glances up with a persuasive frankness that appeals to Winterburne's generosity. There is a sense of being disarmed on some point.

"I want the land. I have made an offer to Mr. Sayre. Can you agree in a fortnight?"

What secret does that piece of rock in Winterburne's hand hold? He would give much to know.

"I shall have to persuade my father that it is for our *best interests*. He is nervous and easily irritated. As for *myself*, you know I have little to say. I shall agree with

the others. I certainly wouldn't want the land for a building site."

They have walked back to the wagon. Winterburne pats his horse's arching neck, passes his hand down the face, and the animal rubs his nose softly against it. He motions to Bradley, who springs in; he drops his specimen into his pocket, and they drive back. Bradley rouses himself a little and chats of some places abroad, with a rather keen sense of discomfiting his listener. He may not know as much concerning singers and opera-goers and promenades, but he is not ignorant of the social and political aspects.

"I care nothing about politics," declares Bradley with his airy grace. "And never having had any real business experience, I suppose I would not be attractive to men" — and he glances at his companion with a nonchalant smile.

Yes, it is to women he is attractive, Winterburne decides with a pang. He has nothing to do all day but sit on the porch with the Halfords; he can play the violin, probably he sings; he can talk of pictures and places; he seems to have travelled a good deal and has the polish of society. Let him also admit the mysterious charm of the handsome, mobile face with vague, changeful expressions that suggest so many things, that are somehow untranslatable. Perhaps women understand these qualities more readily.

Afterward they go to the mill, and Bradley is introduced to the partners and shown about a little. There is an aspect of business everywhere, grimy men hurrying to and fro, there are piles of ore being thrown into the crusher, heaps of coal and slag, cinders and dust, a pandemonium that makes every sensitive nerve shiver. No, not even a magnificent fortune would tempt him to take Winterburne's place and work out his destiny. Only souls of coarse material could be content to delve in this fashion.

It is a relief to Winterburne when he sees the train move off with this elegant gentleman. They certainly are at the opposite ends of the pole, and no attraction can draw them together. Relationship counts for naught. *And there is a vague consciousness that Regina Halford*

has just this fine delicacy, that here is where he has missed his way with her. The girl whose courage he admired when she was the mainstay of the family in their time of need, who could make a heroic sacrifice of self, was after all out of place there. He has heard the story painted in such glowing colors by her fond admirer, Mrs. Bowen, and he has reared his ideal of womanly excellence and nobility on that structure. He is hurt — he experiences a poignant sadness, a sense of loss that for the moment astounds him. He would stare blankly if one told him he had been idealizing both life and love in the person of the woman so strangely dear to him, that he had mistakenly believed her the great inspiration to lead a man's life in higher channels and nobler purposes. For he does not mean that life shall be all drudgery to him.

There comes a spasm of humility, that kind of selfless tenderness that can stand aside for another's happiness. For he wants Regina to be very happy. Perhaps he has not given the case sufficient thought. Has he the qualities that will enable her to blossom into magnificent womanhood? He can put his own dreams aside in bitter silence. But will this other man lead where she desires to follow?

Returning to the smoke of the great chimney he comes down to every-day aims, and feels cordially at home. He takes out his specimen and studies it. He can soon resolve it into its component parts and be master of its secret.

"No," he says to himself, "I will wait until it is all fairly mine. I am thankful my offer was accepted before I saw that. The chances are the vein will run over on the other side," thoughtfully, seeing again the path the boulder has ploughed. Or it may have come down from the mountain.

He takes it between his thumb and forefinger, and, fixing his sight skyward, flings it with a sudden force, turning when it is lost to view.

"What a queer compound Winterburne is!" exclaims Dale glancing at him through the open doorway. "He

has the irrepressible moods of a schoolboy! The contrast between him and that young duke was enough to make any one laugh. I thought the Bradleys were a kind of plain, homely folk!"

"They were, they were. Winterburne favors old Silas most. I used to see him years ago when I was skirmishing round these parts, a tall, broad-shouldered man, straight as a young pine, must have been pretty shrewd too, and that's where Winterburne doesn't favor him. The idea of his throwing away a cool thousand! He didn't have to work for it though," grimly.

"There's a curiously soft streak in Winterburne as there is in some iron," subjoins Dale. "He's doing that for the women folks. What I wonder is that some woman hasn't snapped him up before this, when he has been out from under his sister's wing. I'm glad she's coming here to live, though I fancy if he goes on with me ten years he'll get hardened and tempered, and come out reg'lar blue steel!"

Dale chuckles and nods his gray, bristly head.

"He's none so soft but that he can keep his own counsel when it's best, and make a good bargain. We'll see that he doesn't fling his money away too fast — but it will be safe enough here for some time to come. It's been a stroke of luck to us, Dale. Well," as Winterburne enters, "did you convert the young Apollo to iron-mining?"

That thought is very amusing. Winterburne throws back his head with a quick, soft laugh, pleasant to hear, and showing white, even teeth that one might envy. He seems so instinct with superabundant health and vigor.

"Settled?" asks Dale briefly, "or does he want the thousand all to himself?"

"I think they will agree."

"They would be consummate fools not to."

"I'm going to work," and with that he pulls off his coat. Dale sighs and half envies the magnificent energy.

Regina would have more than her wish if she could see him for the next ten days. He sets her utterly aside.

Between the mill and the house he is getting in order he has hardly a thought to spare. He always goes at necessary work with a fervid cheerfulness.

This new home is on the prettiest bit of land in Warwick, a sort of oasis, where the trees are larger, the herbage greener. The mountain creek comes down back of it, and there is a cluster of small farms. The house is a big, rambling one, planned for two families. Its owners, a thrifty old couple, are quite elated at capturing one of the mill "bosses," and Winterburne in return has quite captured their hearts. They have allowed him to paper and paint, to remove a partition, to put up shelves, take down doors and pile them in the ample garret. He has sent his sister diagrams and descriptions, and she has advised as to appointments. When Brussels carpets, fur and Persian rugs arrive, when *portières* are hung, and odd pieces of furniture that look expensive are brought in, the quaint old couple stand aghast and shake their heads. But he *has* come into a fortune, they remember, though whether he will not run through with it in such extravagance troubles them greatly.

The old home where they have spent the years that took them out of childhood, Miss Hilliard's own little bit of property, is not to be dismantled. Some day she may want to go back. She will bring her small household gods, — her books, pictures, and bedding, and her best loved easy-chairs, — and these will make a friendly atmosphere for her.

Winterburne has just reached the end of his task when he is notified that his deed is ready for him, that at a specified time the heirs will be there to sign off "in consideration of," etc. Mr. Sayre cannot refrain from certain commendations in a dry sort of way, and expresses a kindly hope that his investment will not prove unprofitable.

CHAPTER IX

NO FARTHER THAN THIS

Whoso passes from the negative pole to the positive must necessarily pass through the centre of indifference. — CARLYLE.

THE June day is magnificent, and Beverly is at its most beautiful period. The atmosphere is full of fragrant warmth that has not yet resolved itself into heat; there is a blending of sapphire and emerald tints, the flawless blue of the sky, the vapory green of the swaying elms, the soft tint of the willows, the bristling points of maple leaves in satin sheen, the tassels of the larches, the sombre branches of hemlock and spruce thrusting out their spires of newer and more dazzling hue. But above all is the wealth of roses. Every yard and garden is full of matchless bloom. Corners of porches, summer-houses, lattices, quiver in pinks and reds, every shade imaginable. There is something so beautiful in these shaded streets with their roomy old mansions, the hall doors open with charming vistas, the ladies in soft gowns, ribbons, and laces, the pretty children like veritable fairies. It is so different from what he has left behind that Winterburne experiences a sudden longing for wealth and leisure. At least, he might have come here to live. The fact of being a master and not a daily workman would raise him in the social scale.

The basket phaeton stands before Mr. Sayre's door. There are four ladies in the office. Mrs. Halford's face lights with evident pleasure, and she gently extends her hand.

"Were you waiting for some especial business?" she asks smilingly, yet with a faint touch of reproof. "You *might have come*" —

"I have been so very much engrossed, and I expected to hear every day," he replies courteously, yet with evident pleasure in the thought that they may have looked for him.

Regina is beside her mother. He holds out his hand, and she cannot act churlish; she has acquired too many of the arts of fine breeding. The two girls are in white, but she has on some vapory sort of gown of an indescribable tint, the very faintest lavender gray, with a blossom pink oversheen visible in certain lights. It seems to wrap her about like a cloud. Her broad brimmed hat has the same tint in ribbons, with a great cluster of pale pink crushed roses. He wonders how a woman can tell in what costume she shall look entrancingly lovely. Cynthia is piquant as usual. Perdita is like a tinted cameo on a white surface.

"There was a delay with old Mr. Bradley. He is not so very *old* either," with a tone of apology. "But sometimes he is quite trying. His son has so much patience with him," she says in soft approval, and smiling up at Winterburne. "He is both daughter and son, and one cannot but admire him. He took an idea that signing off this bit of ground signed away the house as well. I suppose he *had* counted on being sole heir, but Jasper takes it so beautifully. And it was not until Monday that he consented."

"I really do not see," comments Winterburne, with a man's sense of justice, thinking, also, of what this fortune has proved to the Halfords, "why he should suppose he was to have the sole right, when he did not remain with the old people." That is not quite what he would like to say, but his other thought seems out of place at the moment, with Mrs. Halford's kindly eyes upon him. He has heard some of the half-mysterious surmises, the early wildness, the coming and going of Morton Bradley. He has not deserved it at all. "The division is much more equitable," he adds.

"*Still,*" remarks the tall young maiden, "it cannot be *otherwise than a great disappointment.*"

"I don't even know that," says Winterburne sturdily. "No one supposed Silas Bradley so rich a man. If there had been thirty or forty thousand, and he had it all, it would be about the same."

For the young man does not imagine Morton Bradley was in his uncle's confidence, even twenty years before.

Regina does not deign any reply to this. The business proceeds, Mrs. Halford signs; the proper steps have been taken to render Miss Cope's signature legal. Morton Bradley's has been affixed previously. Then Norman Winterburne pays over his money, and is a landed proprietor. The legal division is made, and the matter settled.

After this Cynthia begins an eager conversation. When is Miss Hilliard to come? Does he really mean to live at Warwick? Jasper has said it was such an ugly place. Of course he will come up to tea. Beverly is so beautiful now that he ought to take a ramble around and make himself utterly homesick.

All this time he has been watching Regina with that subtle other-side attention that does not take his eyes wholly, and leaves him free to answer, but his thoughts are with her. She is not haughty, simply regal, removed from him and his life. There is such a quick, keen, utter sense of loss that he is blinded, and would stagger if he attempted a step. His own voice has a queer, far-away sound to himself; the leaping blood that pulsed so warmly a few moments ago lags cold and slow. Can it be that he has made such a terrible mistake, one that no after grace may amend?

How it comes about he cannot recall, but in their vivacious interest the girls have expressed a longing to see Warwick for themselves, and judge if it be quite so horrible. They have been to Staunton to the great rolling-mills and engine-works.

"Warwick is nothing like that," he says rather stupidly, with a strained articulation. "But if you would like to see it, why not come. I might escort you now."

Let him have the whole bitterness at once. It will be

over with the sooner. Let him see Regina there in that mean, straggling, disorderly place where her proud feet will disdain the very ground, her fair body shrink in disgust, and her face rigid in its disapproval.

"Yes," declares Cynthia. "Mother, you have an afternoon out, and we ought to celebrate the occasion. I am of an inquiring mind, eagerly seeking for my level. Most things are too high, you see," turning to Winterburne with a laugh.

Mrs. Halford glances from the girls to Regina, and then back again.

"If you would like to go," says the tall daughter indifferently. "I am due at Madame Varney's in just ten minutes."

"If you are sure we shall not inconvenience you," turning to Winterburne. "Are you quite at liberty?"

"Entirely at your service." His voice is a little husky. "And being here—though I would come for you any time," he ends confusedly.

"Oh, we could go this afternoon!" Mrs. Halford says simply. She really would like to see more of him and his way of life, for she has hoped they would be cordial friends. "When shall we return?"

"If I were a real householder now, if my sister were here, I could bid you to supper. I hope you will come then. As for trains—one leaves at six. One goes now in about ten minutes," glancing at his watch.

"Then I will drive you down," remarks Regina, "and come for you at half-past six?"

She does not look at Winterburne, but at her mother.

"Yes," he makes answer.

There is the gentle sort of confusion attendant upon departure. Mr. Sayre clasps his hand with more than ordinary fervor.

"I wish you good luck," he says; "I wish you the best of luck. I can't help thinking but that you will have it. *The best deed of Silas Bradley's whole life was his dying without a will,*"

This is not simply for Winterburne, but quite as much for these pretty girls in whom he takes a fatherly pride. They are great favorites at his house, and Regina is quite a young queen among Beverly people, with her beauty and her grand air.

He walks down with the girls. Mrs. Halford is waiting on the platform. Regina has turned the pony, and sits in her cloud of twilight gray, nodding a gracious farewell.

Winterburne seats himself beside Mrs. Halford, and listens to her cheerful gossip of home affairs, delightful to him because Regina said this or thought that. The brief journey is rather pretty, most of it in sight of the river. At his own station he manages to find a decent, two-seated wagon, though it is only a short distance to the mills. They are just in time to see the iron cast in its first stage, the rough pigs. The stream of fiery liquid runs slowly about the ground in its moulds, fascinating the small audience. They have a glimpse of the great furnace, they listen to the processes, inspect the piles of ore, the crusher, and watch the workmen with the eagerly curious eyes of youth.

Afterward he drives them over to his new home. Mrs. Prall, at his request, sends them in a plate of delicious bread and butter and some of her best company cake, brews a cup of tea for Mrs. Halford, while the girls have a glass of milk. It is quite like a picnic. They inspect the rooms that look really habitable.

"I don't see how you could have chosen and arranged everything so prettily, and without a woman's help," says Mrs. Halford.

"When he might have had *our* united wisdom," announces Cynthia upbraidingly.

"I never thought of that," he answers regretfully. "You see, I am a slow, stupid fellow at the best."

"You are not stupid," declares Perdita, rather resentfully. His strength and gentleness, his evident love for his sister, have *touched* her. "And you may have a large *proportion of sureness* to the slowness which makes an

excellent adjustment. You know the tortoise won the race."

It is a tender, attractive face that smiles up into his. He is wondering if he really cares so much about winning the race he has set for himself. The alluring vision is smouldering in dull grayish tints, just as he has seen clouds settle after a glowing sunset. They are all so happy among themselves, he seems far off outside of it all. Yet a few hours ago he was so content with what fate had brought him. Can he take this lesser pleasure held out to him so cordially? Can he see her and not love her, not suffer from the icy barrier she has reared between them?

Mrs. Halford suggests that it must be train-time. She is most cordial. There is a motherliness in it that touches him, and the pretty manner in which they have included him and his sister in their summer pleasures would make it quite impossible for him to stand out. He promises some things with that uncertain pulsation at his heart that puts a tremor in his voice. It has been a charming bit, like something out of a play, but he is glad to be alone. He watches the workmen filing out of the yard, talking in little groups and going their ways. He bids Dale a good-evening, and walks a short distance with Graniss.

"Well," says the latter, "there can be no question. The process is a success. You are a lucky chap, Winterburne, and we are in luck to have snapped you up in this fashion. It is all right, I suppose, about your property?"

"Oh, yes, all right."

"They're fortunate to get rid of it."

Winterburne gives the conventional little sound that is sometimes a short laugh, — now, mere assent.

"When does your sister come?"

"Soon. I shall hear to-morrow."

Graniss gives him a sharp, sidelong glance. He certainly is not in his usual buoyant mood.

He tramps out to his new home, trying to disentangle the confusion of thought, to certify to himself just where

he stands. Is her world something higher than his? has it forms and graces and idealisms in which he is deficient? Oh, he would try so hard to reach it! There are men who have come up out of the depths and won the respect of the whole world. He has never been in them. There has been no real want in his life, it has lain along the lines of the upper middle class; he could have worked his way through college if he had chosen: he is not an ignorant boor: he realizes with a thrill of exultation that there are men who would trade their money for his brains. By the side of her grace and pretty refinements he may seem a little rude and clumsy—is it possible Jasper Bradley may be nearer her ideal? Let him go carefully over the past. Has he not presumed with very little encouragement? At first they were so friendly—he can recall the little room with its worn carpet, its rather crowded belongings, its cheerful aspect, and a certain jollity that made one feel at ease, though this was generally due to the gayety of the two younger girls, who are being toned down,—he can see that. Was the seeming recession on Regina's part a suggestion that he should have noted with a finer attention? Had he misread it? He cannot imagine a woman dragging out her pure, white soul for a man's inspection, until he has made a bridge of his own for her to cross over to him. He has let himself be borne along the magic current of his own wishes without noting whether the frailer bark was drifting in the beguiling current. Perhaps—yes, it is certain, that he has made a great, a pitiful mistake. And even in his dream of the fortune to be won for her he has gone astray. Even if she were poor, she could not be bought by money—as little tempted; he is proud of that, though he has not exactly dreamed of tempting her, only setting her in that garden of delight where she naturally belonged. But it is all ended. She has shown him to-day, in that fine way he has heard of women using, that there can be nothing between them; she has swept away the rapturous faith of the past, and left him to grope about until he can find some sure footing else-

where. He is ignorant of such experiences; he hardly knows where to turn for strength, or how to fight off that dumb nervelessness creeping over him. He is like a child in his first great disappointment.

After a while he rouses himself. He has been going about mechanically, putting touches here and there in a dazed way. Mrs. Prall has tapped at his door and begged him to come in and have a cup of tea; but he feels that he could not swallow food nor drink. He stands for some time nearly in the centre of the room, his eyes wandering about, seeing nothing.

"It is not her fault," he cries with repressed passion, as if some one had accused her; "not her fault. She told me—yes—and I went on dreaming. I thought time and my own ardent wishes must work the miracle; I fancied myself superhuman," and he laughs with a sad bitterness, "but the old world has no miracle-workers to-day. She is innocent of it all—it has been my own heedless folly, so I must gather up myself and go on; I am not the first man who has had his lamp blown out by an adverse blast, and I shall find my way—it is there I know; I have only myself to blame."

Then he tries to put it out of his mind. He will show her that he can take up the friendly basis this relationship gives them all, for he cannot go away. His lot and his work are here.

Past midnight he throws himself down on the Turkish lounge he selected only a few days ago with such pleasure. In a vague way he wonders whether anything will ever delight him again. His sleep is fragmentary and unrefreshing, but he is up in the early dawn of the summer morning, for there are some touches to be put to the flower-beds in front of the window where Alice will sit and look out. Will it always be Alice now?

Two days later he goes to the station for her. When the train comes in he watches the two passenger coaches,—the local trains are seldom long. Ah—and he hurries down to one end, smiling up into a familiar face and pushes *he brakeman* aside, lifting her gently down himself.

"You do not know how strong I have grown," she says smilingly. "I had half a mind to discard my old companion," and she gives her crutch a pat; "but it seemed ungrateful when he has given me his cheerful support so many times. Dr. Graham has been studying up climates and altitudes and what not, and is quite sure the change will prove beneficial. So you are not to worry about the ugliness or the tone of society or any earthly thing; and I am so glad to get back to you, Norman — so glad. Do you believe it?"

He presses her hand. "You can hardly guess how glad I am to have you." He is not so utterly adrift after all. There is a sudden brightening to life, so much joy can one generous, large-hearted woman infuse.

They have been walking down the platform.

"Oh!" she begins, "I have some boxes with me, 'traps,' in a man's parlance; here are my checks. And the others" —

"May not be here until night." He goes to see after the traps. She steadies herself on her crutch and glances around; not a very inviting prospect truly. But over the river — ah! how much of comfort and beauty there often is over the river. She is thankful she has turned her eyes that way; she is still gazing at the everlasting hills in their purple splendor, when Winterburne returns. His wagon is waiting for her, and he helps her in it with a satchel of reasonable size, and the rest are left for the express.

"Do you remember," she says, "that it is two years since we have really lived together? I could hardly believe it at first. Why, I would have been content to go out in a howling wilderness with you," and she gives a soft, glad laugh.

They are very little alike in looks, but there are certain expressions and the peculiar soft tenderness of the laugh, that are wonderfully similar.

"You have come to the wilderness, or perhaps it is nearer the desert; but I found one oasis and pitched our tent there."

"It looks very little like our neat, thrifty towns. There may be a good opportunity for missionary work, beginning with cleanliness and order."

"I had not thought of that." He glances about critically, quite as if he had hardly noted the disorder and evidences of unthrift before. "Most of the men get tolerably good wages, too, and living is cheap. There is our mill."

"I am so glad, so thankful that your experiment succeeded; and, Norman, one of my greatest sources of gratitude is that it was won before this fortune came to you: you don't owe it to that. I am half jealous, you see. You won it by your good right hand and your clear brain, as so many of the great things of life have been won."

He was so proud of it a month ago, he cares so little about it now.

"And these people — these new cousins?" she says inquiringly.

"They are anxious to see you; you will like them, I am sure. There is quite an odd story connected with them: I have not told you, it was so long to put in letters. I had met them before — the winter I was in New York — I boarded with a friend of theirs. We might never have met again" — is that quite the truth? — "yet it is singular," he adds by way of compromise, "how often you do run across the same people. Of course I was more than surprised when I found who they were; so we had a bit of acquaintanceship to begin with. Mrs. Halford is such a delightfully motherly woman. The two younger girls will amuse you: one is the niece, Miss Cope. Miss Halford is" — what shall he say about the woman he still loves? — "rather stately and cold, but handsome in a certain way."

"And you liked them when they were poor?"

"Oh, immensely!"

"And the young man, the real Bradley among them?"

"I must not prejudice you. I don't believe I am very good at judging people, except for business purposes. He is rather peculiar, and very handsome."

"Then the handsome young man and the handsome young woman ought to join hands."

He is glad she is looking straight ahead.

"You certainly have not deceived me in regard to Warwick," she says with an abrupt change. "It is rather dismal. There is one redeeming feature in the landscape"—

"We are going thither," and he makes a turn. "But we are not compelled to live here after all," he exclaims brightly. "I could come up and down on the train. Beverly is beautiful. Most of the little towns are, save in the iron districts."

"I am not difficult to entertain, you know. And since I shall have you—and all your cousins," laughingly. "Were they glad to come into fortunes—but what a question! Were they very poor, I mean?"

"Mrs. Halford was in some financial difficulty just then, I believe, owing to bad times, but she had a small portion of her own. And Miss Cope as well," he explains briefly.

"It really was nice to know something about them before," Miss Hilliard says after a little pause. "And the young man was well known."

"No, it was his father. He had spent his youth here, but that was long ago. For twenty or so years he had not been heard of. As I told you, it was a rather puzzling search."

"Oh, this is quaint and pretty," she exclaims as they drive up the short lane. "Yes, I know I shall like it, since you are to be here."

He smiles. They have come to the boy and girl plans: he was to have the home and she was to be the house-keeper. He lifts her out and stands her on the porch. There is one straggling rose in bloom here, and a great tangle of honeysuckle. All the air is fragrant with it.

"I suppose," she says slowly, "that Bradley House is a grand old place? I almost wish you had been *the* Bradley, so that the first choice could have been yours."

He takes her within and explains that he has left many little touches to her taste and pleasure, and that presently,

when they get to real living, they will feel at home. And when Lois comes everything will move smoothly. Until then they are to take their meals with their landlady.

Lois is a distant connection of the Hilliards, who came to nurse Alice in her misfortune, and has never left her save now and then for a brief visit. She has chosen this hiatus for a journey, and is to rejoin them in a day or two.

"I shall inspect it with the eye of faith," says Alice, glancing about. "But you have done wonders. I always said you were as good as a woman," and she turns her eyes gratefully on him. "But you have fagged yourself all out. Why, I hardly noted it before. You are heavy-eyed, and — you look as if you had been studying late o' nights. Have you some new project in view? There is a fascination about inventing, I suppose, for most people never stop, whether they are successful or not."

Winterburne laughs gently. "It is simply a process," he says. "I cannot aspire to the rank of an inventor at present."

"I do not see any difference in it. But you shall not wear yourself out. I have come just in time to take care of you."

"Yes," he makes answer in a tone that gives her a quick thrill of pleasure. He is very glad to have her. Life seems brighter than it did yesterday.

After she is a little rested and has gone around her new habitation, Mrs. Prall is called in. She is a plain-featured country woman whose girlish softness vanished long ago. Her grayish gown is made severely plain, and hangs rather than fits her lank figure. One shoulder is a trifle higher and larger than the other, and one hand has grown noticeably larger with the continual using. They are very long, with dull bluish veins like small rivulets running in every direction. Her face has the weather-beaten look of women who are much out of doors. Her eyes are light but shrewd and kindly, and though her lips are thin, there is a faint shadow of a smile hovering about them, a remnant of earlier days when joyousness was a more frequent guest.

Her thin hair, one of those nondescript tints, is drawn tightly back and twisted in a little knob.

"I'm proper glad to see you," she says with a cordial clasp of the hand. "And no doubt you're all tuckered out with such a long trip. I ain't been to York in years and years, but my man, he goes once't in a while, and he says he's clean wore out with the crowds of people. Where they all come from is one of the seven mysteries. And you had a long journey before you reached there. Sakes alive! but you had a good deal of courage. How could you find your way, and a stranger too!"

"I did not come alone." Miss Hilliard smiles with a tender grace that charms Mrs. Prall. "Or, at least, only from Jersey City, where I was put on the train."

"You don't look a mite like him," nodding toward Winterburne, "only jest as you smiled. And he's got a smile like a woman, some of the sweet religious kind: I've been sayin' to Mr. Prall ever since he come here. And I do hope you'll like the house and the garden. I ain't much of a hand for the new-fangled flowers that you've got to take in-doors soon as frost comes. I've got pinks and sweet williams and hollyhocks and marigolds and such. There use ter be lots of roses, but somehow they've died out. Worms eat 'em up, and Jason, he thought they wasn't worth keepin'. But I told Mr. Winterburne he could get whatever he liked. We shouldn't grumble, we ain't that kind;" and she ends with a short laugh more like a chuckle.

"Oh, I shall soon be quite at home," replies Miss Hilliard. "And flowers are my dear delight. Are there many wild ones about?"

"Not around here," says Winterburne. "An iron and limestone soil doesn't help them to materialize."

"There's rhodydendrons up the mountain a ways. Curis how city folks are alwers goin' after wild flowers, when you can have 'em sweet and tame to home. And them queer things of ferns unrollin' out of a brown kind of hood—people go sarchin' after 'em 's if they were cracked. I alwers gather sweet fern, it's so good to make tea when one's

blood ain't jest right; but I never knew any special use for the others. City folks that come boardin' in the summer don't know what to do with their time. I never was at a loss. And when do you like to have your dinner? I've alwers cooked at noon, and I told Mr. Winterburne you'd be good and hungry after such a trip," and she nods in a satisfied manner.

"Yes, at noon," returns Miss Hilliard. "And you must not change any of your ways for this little while until our own housekeeper comes."

Mrs. Prall gathers up the corner of her checked apron and goes out to the kitchen where there is a savory smell.

"I am afraid you will not find much in the way of companionship," Winterburne begins as if he had just realized the fact. "But there were not many places to choose from, and this had so much sunshine and was quiet. You could not live amid the clatter of machinery and the dirt and confusion, and *I* wanted something different when the day was done."

"We shall be very comfortable, I know. And I could be content anywhere with you, remember that, always," she says with exquisite tenderness.

There is something left — it has been there for him since his boyhood. Let him be thankful and content.

CHAPTER X

MISS HILLIARD'S GUESTS

The dictate of justice is to do no wrong, that of moral susceptibility to give no offence; and in this the force of the graceful is most perceptible. — CICERO'S *Offices*.

"MISS HILLIARD has come," announces Mrs. Halford, unconsciously twisting the end of the note she holds in her hand, and summoning up the resolution that braces one for an effort. "We must call on her. We must invite her to Bradley House, even if she is not one of the real relatives."

"Oh, do!" cries Cynthia. "I have made up my mind to fall quite in love with her."

They both glance at Regina, as if this might be a somewhat overt declaration. For, in a rather odd fashion, the eldest daughter has fallen or risen into the position of arbiter of their own household. Mrs. Halford at times makes faint little protests, Cynthia mutinies outright, but Regina keeps her authority without any apparent effort.

"Yes," she makes answer with delicate approval in her tones.

"Well, let us go to-day. Perdita will be out of school at one. There is a train at two."

"Go without any warning? And she may not be at home. You are so hasty, Cynthia."

"I don't want to spend forever considering. And to-morrow I must be in school all day with those tiresome examinations. I couldn't go then. And I'll just run down in town and telegraph. Miss Hilliard won't have made enough friends this early to be out visiting, it isn't at all likely," says Cynthia with a laugh.

No one offers any protest. Cynthia dons a broad sun hat and is off.

"I hope we shall like her," says Mrs. Halford with her gentle little sigh.

"If we shouldn't, we are not compelled to go on with the acquaintance," returns Regina.

"We have always liked him — Mr. Winterburne — so much."

"Yes," comments Regina indifferently.

"Will you go?"

"Of course, unless you should prefer not to have me."

"What an idea! But I thought — the other day" — The elder pauses in an embarrassed fashion.

"Why, it would hardly have been worth while to give up my music and my French. And since Warwick had so small an attraction, as you all admitted" —

It was not simply the remaining at home. Even now Mrs. Halford can see Regina's stately coldness, the more difficult to disapprove because it had no element of anger or disdain. She cannot remember that there ever was any tenderness between them. He used to talk a good deal to Cynthia — if he ever had any fancy it could hardly have been for Regina, the mother thinks, and she feels a soft flush rising in her cheeks that she should even suspect him of lover-like fancies. There could never be anything between him and Regina, they are too radically different. But she loves an atmosphere of friendliness. She can feel the little strains in the social environment without understanding just what they mean, and they are not agreeable. Yet she is very proud of her tall, stylish daughter, who has already become such a favorite in Beverly society.

There is a refined and exclusive air about the "best" people. They are in a large majority, to be sure. The middle class is apt to be small in a town where there is so little manual employment. They have a serene air. No one jostles or crowds them, so they are never bristling up with dozens of fine defences.

Regina has been made most welcome among them. She has not had to knock at any door: they have opened to her with a gracious courtesy. This is not the mere world of

pretence and rivalry, of envy and hatred and tearing down ; it is a sort of ideal society, such as she used to imagine in the past days, to sigh for. The fine shades of manner, the repose, the *savoir vivre*, the little touches of tone and accent, are indications of a correct standard. The people of Beverly are in a certain way intellectual. True, there is no library, but a very excellent book-club, and not a few fine private collections. The ladies have several societies. They meet one afternoon in each week, when a paper is read on some of the higher range of subjects, a magazine article gone over, and discussions on the new story-writers of the day, the new poems. There is a Shakespeare Club that meets fortnightly, including both sexes, who read plays, analyze the characters, pick out particularly fine passages. Through the winter they have private theatricals occasionally, a musicale now and then. Regina discovers that she has a rather superior contralto voice, and Madame Varney is cultivating it to the utmost. She is a very fair reader also.

There are some outside entertainments that find their way to Beverly, notably concerts of the higher order, and some of the best-known lecturers. Music Hall is a very pretty place that would not discredit a larger town. The amateurs give concerts for charitable purposes, often some object at a distance. They keep a bed in two hospitals in different cities. They make up several missionary boxes in the course of the year. Then there are church suppers and fairs, in which the young ladies make themselves as attractive as possible. Social enjoyments also, pretty dinners and delightful dances, just enough to give touches of interest but not savoring of dissipation. Some one has a houseful of guests, and plans entertainments in what might be considered quite an English fashion, only it is an old custom of their own. Or they go off to some city and come home with new ideas of pleasure. They are very well satisfied with themselves, these Beverly people, and they not infrequently disdain the throngs of summer tourists that invade the remarkable places about them,

even their own Mount Sardis where they go for a day, or even a week, when they have friends staying there. The "Hops" at Mount Sardis are one of the great delights of the summer for the young people, who go up in great carriage loads.

Regina, as I said, has been made welcome in a fine appreciative manner. She fits into this life: she has a dainty conservativeness, the quality that has kept her from making friends or equals from among the rank and file of the people with whom her lot has been cast. She has a quick, intuitive adaptiveness: she loves all the little forms and fine-drawn distinctions with a fervor that amounts to a passion. She has a theory that these are all subtle indications of a fineness of nature that is born with one, has been born with her, that no mere outside culture can give. She would like to believe that it comes from the long line of ancestors, but here her reasoning seems rather at fault. Silas Bradley was honest and upright, but the ambitious desires could hardly have descended from him or his sister Joanna. True, the other Bradley ladies may have been different. At all events, ancestry is a good thing.

Cynthia has grumbled not a little about the hardships of her school training and her studies, but she would indeed be amazed if she knew the hours Regina devoted to books with no compulsion at all. Still, she has always had an ardent love for such pursuits. She has taken her part in social life as well, and they have almost come to think themselves the last of the Bradleys when Jasper and his father startle them by their appearance, and later on Winterburne.

In spite of Jasper Bradley's fascinating manner and a charm Regina cannot reduce to any of her theories, there is a little feeling that he must stand on his own merits, and not shelter himself behind any approbation she may have won. There is at first a sort of delicate curiosity that in conservative training is not allowed to descend to vulgar gossip. His handsome appearance, his air of elegance with the quaint foreign touches, his trained voice, the ease

that occasionally warms into imperiousness, the vague softness that is akin to some latent, well-concealed sorrow, proves an almost instant source of interest. During the last twenty-five years no one had known any absolute fact concerning his father's life, and whatever had gone before was half forgotten, half surmised. The son's devotion to him was beautiful to see. He came to church with him on Sunday, was as attentive to him as any daughter could be, took him to drive, and on fine days they would sit in the park together, or take a short walk through the principal streets. Some of the older men remembered the gay young fellow, who now seemed so much older than his years warranted, with his bowed figure, his snowy hair, and his wrinkled face.

Regina found that he was soon accepted on his own appearance, if not his own merits. He was charmingly companionable. The little strain soon wore off, and, though she kept a curious impression about the elder Bradley, it could in no respect be connected with Jasper. There were allowances to be made for one whose life had been shattered by a great sorrow. All of them were sympathetic. And he added a peculiar brightness to the old house.

But Winterburne belonged to quite another sphere. She understood at once that his aims were different, that he would be out of harmony with the little world where she had been something of a queen. She might have admired the sturdy pluck and industry, if it had not been connected with the days she desired to forget utterly, and the fact that even then the man had proposed to bring her to that common, every-day level she so hated! She wanted him to realize the distance between them,—not any outward, tangible distance made by money or even station, she could not claim this now; it had all been swept away; but that fine, subtle, integral difference of natures. She would keep on the higher plane. He would not really care to attain to it. He must feel out of place: there could be small interest for him. So she had simply ignored the past, had impressed him with the consciousness, at least, so she

thought, that those few years were an accidental happening, as they were, she tells herself continually.

Having laid this sure foundation, she can go her way without a misgiving. She really does not want to stand aside and have the others manage even this friendship without her. She wants to know for herself what Miss Hilliard is like—she is in some respects answerable for the young man's training. For at this period of her life Regina has a great faith in the influence of one person over another in the shaping of character. There are times when the vague longing crosses her mind to have some greater work to do, but she tells herself that will come presently. And Mr. Winterburne is not of the kind she would desire to undertake. She does not admit that the fact lies in his having been her lover; it is in some vital lack that renders him less attractive to her.

The Bradleys have gone away for a week or so on a little tour to various places. On the whole, Mr. Bradley's physical health improves, his mind is less vague and abrupt. There are times when he is wonderfully companionable, when he has a fascination that startles Regina, as if a hidden fire blazed out, throwing long, brilliant rays of flame, that quiver and sparkle and leap, until one shrinks back with a half fear. Then there are moments when he is curiously tender, but it hardly seems affection.

At Warwick Station, Winterburne comes for them. He is pleased with this attention so speedily paid to his sister. When his eyes catch a glimpse of Regina, and this is while the train is slowing up, a sudden glow lights his face. None of them can tell how much it has transfigured it.

Mrs. Halford and Cynthia come out first. He gives the elder lady his hand, and leads her a step or two away, listening to her greeting. He bows to Regina with a dignified pleasure. He looks so strong, so manly, she has to admit, not mere brawn and muscle after all. His light cloth suit that serves to throw up the fair, rather ruddy face, toned with the dark eyes and the narrow line of mustache that leaves the red of the lips visible, is a part

of himself, though it is not his working attire. His hands are ungloved, but they are clean, and the nails well trimmed. As he takes her arm with a gentle touch and lifts her up the rather high carriage step a sudden consciousness of great strength comes over her, rouses a sort of resistance within her, though she makes no outward sign.

It is very hot here in the dusty road, with no trees at hand. The air is dingy with motes of iron and coal and dust, and a trifle smoky. But he skirts round the edge, and brings them a little in the shade of the hills where the driving is much pleasanter. And before Mrs. Prall's door is a row of immense hemlock-trees, that tone the air to a cooling softness, and keep up a murmurous sound not unlike distant waves. The porch looks social, with chairs and a hammock slung across the end. And as they stop, a tall figure rises, intensified with the train's billowy softness that supplements her gown. She always wears them in the house, admitting frankly to Lois that it is a foolish thing and an extravagance, but she likes it. It gives her the appearance of slimness, though she is of medium size. Her rather small head adds to this effect. Round it is wound a mass of dull, light hair, that here and there in some peculiar conjunctions takes on a silvery gleam. But it suits the face, the large, well-opened clear eyes that may sometimes be a pale blue, but oftener that translucent gray, with the fathomless well back of them. The face is good, kindly, with a certain degree of spirit and animation, an interesting rather than beautiful face, though there may be moments when it rises to inspiration. The smile is the only quality that brings out any likeness to Winterburne, and in that subtle, elusive glimpse you see they resemble one another.

"This is my sister, Miss Hilliard," he says, as he marshals them up the two steps, and presents them in the order of precedence.

"My dear," Mrs. Halford begins, after they have made acquaintance, "I want you to feel that you belong to us as well as your brother. Your mother was my cousin's wife,

and, though I never saw him, still we have the family bond between us. And as you stand so alone, you must be taken in with the same good-fellowship."

"Thank you," Miss Hilliard responds with her soft smile. "Shall we go within doors?"

"Oh, not just yet," cries Cynthia. "Let us look about a bit. It is so shady and cool here. Why, we seem to have entered another country. Are you going to,—can you really like Warwick?"

"I shouldn't like it if I were looking for mere beauty. I do not think I should if I considered the sensuous side of comfort and delight. But I have had a curious desire to live in a working town and study the types, so different from anything I have really known. For I have spent most of my life in a pretty country village, where everything was cleared up by two o'clock in the afternoon, and by nine in the evening you were all in bed. It is admirable for childhood and old age, but in between one wants something more stirring. And one would like to feel that one's life was not quite wasted."

Regina glances at her with a kind of questioning interest.

"Yes," says Cynthia suddenly, her indolent eyes brightening. "But what is any one to do,—a girl or a woman who has no especial genius?"

"I think we all have a genius of some kind, that peculiar inspiration that isn't taught or acquired in the usual way. And some of us do not come to it until a good deal of life has gone by. Another puzzle seems to me the not getting to the place where you can do your best work. And the hard thing is to be commended for a second or third rate work, when you know you could do so much better in another place. Is it heterodox, Mrs. Halford, to believe we are not all in our right places?"

Mrs. Halford looks a little mystified. "I think God gives us all a work to do everywhere," she says a little uncertainly. The question has been so sudden. "Some of it may be very quiet work—that does not show."

"We argue the point a good deal, Lois and I. Lois

Strong is my handmaiden, my general-in-chief, who believes there can't be any mistake: that if you are set in a cabbage-plot, it is because you are a cabbage, and must continue one to the end of your days. But I have seen a variety of weeds expand magnificently in the plot, and I dare say a strawberry or a rose would grow in the same soil. Some one not all-seeing might make a mistake in the planting; or a bird flying over drop a seed. Everybody is fighting to get out of something, and if the person did not feel the drawing, the desire, you see all would be content."

"But there are certain laws, a certain order of things, that must be obeyed, or it leads to confusion, radicalism," says Regina in her clear, high-bred voice.

"And I do not mean these things," subjoins Cynthia with a crease between her brows. "I'm not a bit intellectual. I hate 'isms' and philosophies, and study. There is something that takes any one through, that gives them the power to paint a picture, to write a story" —

"But they have the work, the long, arduous toil at first, my child," and Miss Hilliard stretches out her hand and covers Cynthia's, so plump and dimpled.

"What I mean is that no toil or study would give me the power," says Cynthia with blunt honesty. "And I don't much love the — did some one call them 'the sweet, small graces' of common, every-day life? I couldn't spend a whole morning over a flower-bed, or a piece of embroidery, or concocting some rare dish. I don't love to sew. I wish you could see the people at Beverly — you will some day, then you can understand better what I mean, for I'm afraid, like poor Stephen Blackpool, that 'it's all a muddle' to me. I want to find something clear and smooth" —

"There isn't much smooth sailing" —

"Oh, yes," interrupts Cynthia. "You will find it at Beverly. People sail right along. There are no snags, no windings about, no tumult, no stirring of the pool, but they just go on and on. The sun shines, the wind is fair, the trees just wave about so," and she moves her hand slowly; "it's like a strain of music, and it tires me."

"There are not a great many people who have the opportunity to get tired that way," says Miss Hilliard. Then she laughs a little, two or three soft notes. "You must come and visit me sometime, Miss Cynthia, when we can fight out some of these queer questions, and try to get at the larger one, — what one is to do. I don't half know myself. And I shall not allow you to traduce Beverly until I have seen it. Norman thinks it a picture of what the garden of Eden might have been."

"It is one of the most beautiful of places," interposes Regina. "Cynthia is given to moods of exaggeration, which are not exactly discontent, after all. And she does enjoy life, but she has yet to learn that it is not all amusement."

"A tremendous amusement might satisfy me. It is the little dawdling things I complain of that ruffle me up the wrong way."

Perdita, meanwhile, has been leaning over the railing talking to Winterburne, who is amused at this rippling tirade of Cynthia's that reminds him of the brook rushing over its pebbly way, gathering up straws and bits of dead grass as if it had hardly another moment before it must bring in its harvest of something, and then reaching the open, the sunny, broad space, all is let go, and the little rill rests as if it had never known hurry. But he can see that Regina is a trifle annoyed, and makes a diversion, for he knows Alice is not quite ready to talk of herself, the subject that would interest Cynthia most.

"Do you care to know what I did think of the first time I was in Beverly?" he says, turning his eyes to Mrs. Halford. "'And they came to Elim, where there were wells of water and trees of palm,'" shortening the quotation a bit.

"Regina loves better the 'Coming to the land where it seemed always afternoon,'" said Cynthia mischievously.

"'Only to see and hear the far off sparkling brine;
Only to hear were sweet, stretched out beneath the pine,'"

repeats Winterburne in a slow monotone.

Regina suddenly compresses her nether lip. It is one

of her favorite poems, and that he should be able to quote it at random, the one line that has so often lingered in her memory, stings her with a kind of resentment.

"Oh, if you are going to quote poetry," laughs Perdita, "let it be something else. We have exhausted the Lotus Eaters. There was a time when we had it almost for daily bread."

"I have not gone so far as that," interposes Miss Hilliard. "I have it for dessert. And that leads me to a question: does any one go out boating on the river? We rowed up to Gilsey's Cove a few evenings ago; half way to Beverly, Norman said. It is a beautiful dreamy river in the twilight, with the purple crags and peaks over opposite."

Regina kindles a little. Being rowed up or down the river is one of her most beguiling enjoyments. She explains that they not only go out evenings, but have picnics up the river, taking some lunch and building fires in true gypsy style.

"I like a river so much. If I were an artist I should always be painting scenes with some bit of a winding river in them. It is the first time I have had a river for a near neighbor. I wish, indeed, it were nearer. I should like to look out of my window at it."

"We can see it from some points because we are so high," explains Mrs. Halford. "It brings back pictures that my mother used to describe, though I think people have learned to love nature more than they did in the past years. And I hope we shall be able to persuade you to come and view it with us."

"It will not take much persuading," Miss Hilliard declares with her charming smile that wins the mother's sympathetic heart.

Presently they walk around in the shade and take a view of the great gray peak that seems to shut Warwick off from the towns above. The rocky, and in some places wooded ridge is the boundary line of the town, as if nature meant that most of her *débris* should be together. Miss

Hilliard walks beside Regina and makes an effort to draw her out. She has an odd little swing, a picturesque motion that one might consider an affectation until they knew its cause. Winterburne follows her with his eyes, but is engrossed in parrying the assaults of the younger girls and playing host to Mrs. Halford. They come in through a side entrance, catching a glimpse of Mrs. Prall sitting under her own hop-vine and pear-tree, shelling pease. And in this sort of hallway, sitting by the window sewing, is Miss Strong who, by one of those rare occurrences, has rightly inherited her name. She is not aggressive, but every line in her face is to some purpose and has a definite meaning. It is a rather narrow face, intensified by having the hair brushed plainly back; light brown hair, thin and threaded at the temples with shining silver. The features are of the aquiline cast, resolute, but not impatient, biding times and seasons. The figure is firm, well knit, but with no superfluous flesh. You cannot imagine a superfluous sentiment, even. She has a grave dignity, and greets the visitors from her own vantage ground.

"This is my den," announces Miss Hilliard, leading them onward. The room is off the parlor proper, made of the two small rooms. Even Regina, who has been cultivating strictly artistic tastes with a view to sometime remodelling their own home, for she has a presentiment that when matters are fully settled they will not remain at Bradley House, has to admit a certain indescribable harmony in the blending tones of the unpretentious appointments. There is an evident idealism about it that touches her, and an air of comfort in the using that stamps Miss Hilliard as a person of taste. If her world has been narrow, there certainly were outlooks, the young girl decides. She is somewhat surprised, perhaps annoyed, at her own mistaken conclusions respecting Miss Hilliard. With the insistence of youth and inexperience she is quite sure conclusions are the correct thing for the training of one's mind, and she is rather amazed when they do not fit.

She glances critically at the books. Poets and poets,

ancient and modern, very recent ones indeed. Some well chosen and well read novels, that if you took them in your hand would open at familiar places. A shelf of fine translations, some classics, magazines, and papers filling up the bottom shelf, and one table strewn with them, at which two chairs still stand cosily, — was she sitting there last night with her brother? There is an odd, very convenient desk with drawers and pigeon-holes and papers scattered about, a high easy-chair and a low one beside the window. There is a mannish desk over in the corner with a bracket lamp to light it. A few fine engravings and photographs are on the walls, and two small water colors.

They accept their hostess' invitation, and are seated. Certainly there is enough here to entertain one not too exigent in the books of photographs and portfolios of engravings. While Regina is considering the exact shade of interest that is the proper thing for a leading comment, Cynthia has rushed in as usual.

"Mr. Winterburne was telling us of some of your artistic fancies," she says. "What I meant about genius a while ago was this gift, this capacity to do something ordinary people cannot do. And he said" —

"She is a very modest genius, and rather disclaims that high appellation," remarks her brother, who has come in the room at that moment. "But when one has entered on public life, one must expect to bear part of its penalties."

"I have one gift," Miss Hilliard confesses with a touch of rising color but no embarrassment. "I ought to have at least *one*," and she smiles. "It is this."

She reaches over and takes up two books. One is square and flat, and in elegant holiday binding; the other, not so ornate. The first goes to Regina. Perdita kneels by her when she opens the title-page. It is one of the lovely stories for children done in verse, by a skilful pen, and accompanied with full-page illustrations, exquisitely colored. The faces and poses are admirable. Perdita utters comment after comment with unalloyed delight, and unstinted admiration. A curious emotion steals over Regina, — a

kind of dull envy ; a feeling, too, that they have in some mysterious fashion been set astray by Winterburne. Why has he never spoken of his sister before, never enthusiastically praised her ? Perhaps he thinks — she suddenly remembers that in the old time he used to sit silent, listening to the chatter of the girls, or at best, making brief replies, and talking kindly commonplaces with her mother. The Bowens never left the safe shore of ordinary passing events, and were much occupied with their own experiences, and the wonderful baby. She, too, was a sort of looker-on, — her true life never came up to the surface. Was it so with him ? Did he think it was hardly worth while to waste that higher interest on an unappreciative audience ?

There have been a great many events and small matters to stir up Regina's resentment. Before one has finished seething and settled, another ingredient has been thrown in. The utter surprise of having him one of the Bradley heirs, the fear of his stepping at once into dominant lover-like relations, the contrast between him and Jasper Bradley provoked a kind of strenuous protest, the more earnest because there was a suspicion of its unreason. The talk about the piece of land at Hazens recurs, — she can recall how half angrily Jasper returned. She was sitting there on the porch, at her easel, and had glanced up with a faint smile of inquiry.

"There's something about Winterburne's eagerness to get that mineral property that I'd like to fathom," he had said, sitting down on the step and fanning himself with his hat, making a beguiling picture with all his golden tints in the soft green shading. "He's looked about until he's found out its true value. He would never offer a thousand dollars more unless he had known its real worth to him. I saw him pick up something — a stone to me," Jasper had laughed with a flavor of irony, "but I have no doubt he understood it at a glance. He brought it home to make sure. Do you think Sayre can be in collusion with him ?"

"Mr. Sayre? Collusion?" Regina was startled at Jasper's questions. "I should trust Mr. Sayre in any case, in all things," she had answered decisively.

"There's something. If I knew anything about minerals or iron" — he had shrugged his shoulders in distaste. "He has a way of making it look very fair, but we haven't sold yet."

"He has one-quarter share in it, you know."

"That does not add a straw's weight to his honesty or fair dealing."

Regina turned to her painting with a touch of self-condemnation that she did not stand up — not exactly in his defence, but for kindlier judgment. She could see Winterburne examining his find, and bringing it home for further consideration. But if it had not met his expectation, and he had receded from his proffer, would they have thought this fair?

What Regina does not know is, that Jasper has satisfied himself to some extent through a third party, who agrees with the general estimate.

The point that touches Regina the most keenly now is, that she has made a mistake all along concerning this young man, the mortification of not having discerned anything unusual in him at first. *Is* there anything unusual in him? There are many common, almost vulgar organizations that *do* blunder upon success, that accumulate fortunes, and yet never raise themselves above the ranks, are quite content with the surroundings to which they have been accustomed, who would not enjoy being lifted up to the higher plane. Of course, she has theories that a certain degree of energy and ambition follows in the wake of intellectual gifts, and she translates this into the desire to rise in one's social position. He has not shown this; he has settled himself on the outskirts of this wretched little town, where there can be no companionship, no advancement. Miss Hilliard could help him to make an attractive home anywhere. Can he not see?

It is the one side of her being, the disappointed duality

that stirs this inward stream to a rushing and turbid current in which nothing can be clearly discerned. Why she should be disappointed in him when she has in no degree idealized him or counted on any promise of his manhood, she does not pause to consider. The other part, the appreciative sense of beauty, is taking in the simple sweetness and decided character of the work before her. It is a high gift to put souls in these pretty children's faces, to make them express almost every emotion in a childish, eager manner. Her bits of scenery copying, well and faithfully done though they may be, are not in any sense creations, she reflects.

Cynthia is immensely amused by her book. It is one of those *brochures*, meant merely for entertainment and laughter, that tells a story from the comic side of nature. Mrs. Halford exclaims in gentle wonder, and glances up every few moments to see if this, to her, marvellous power, is not written in Miss Hilliard's face; but this is one of the instances where the sign manual is not stamped on the exterior. All her tenderness is aroused by the children's book; she takes the girl to her motherly heart at once.

"O Re," cries Cynthia in her enthusiasm, "if *you* could paint like this!"

Regina colors at the unconscious stab.

"Then you paint?" inquires Miss Hilliard with interest.

"I paint after the manner of an accomplishment," returns Regina, with a touch of rather haughty self-depreciation. "I copy the prettiness of nature. I have no genius, only a little imitation."

"Ah, but you should see my attempt at trees in oil!" says Miss Hilliard. "They rival those that come out of the Noah's arks, fresh from the iron hand of machinery. I have just the one gift for faces, and those exaggerated things bordering on caricature. I can't even draw a decent likeness of my best friend. I tried nearly everything to entertain myself, once, when I thought I might be an invalid for life. This came to me quite by accident when all else failed. But something always has to furnish me the cen-

tral idea. When I am once started I can go on ;” and she smiles cheerfully.

Cynthia has fallen in love with her on a very short notice. When the pictures have exhausted their stock of adjectives, they bethink themselves of their main idea, and beseech her to set a time for her visit, the sooner the better for them, since they will still have a few days of solitude. But they want her to see the Bradleys, and hear Jasper’s wonderful violin music, so a week will be the very shortest period in which she can accomplish all this.

Winterburne is anxious to have her accept, and playfully traverses all her excuses. He can take her any day ; he will run up frequently ; Lois will look after him, and she finds herself without any valid objections, since she is well enough to really enjoy going about. She has taken a fancy to these friendly cousins, and motherly Mrs. Halford recalls something she has so long missed and mourned, that she is induced to appoint the day.

They cannot remain to supper, but Lois brings them a dish of berries and ice-cold custard, makes a cup of tea that refreshes Mrs. Halford, and with the most cordial sincerity they express their pleasure at the friendship so agreeably begun.

That evening, over their dainty tea-table, when Winterburne has been silent a long while, Alice says, —

“They are delightful, all but Miss Halford. I don’t wonder you have not been enthusiastic about her. A handsome face and fine figure are her greatest attractions. We shall agree about her, I foresee.”

CHAPTER XI

CONFIDENCES

Ask me not what. I will tell you everything as it fell out.
Midsummer Night's Dream.

MISS HILLIARD is quite in love with the old Bradley House, and charmed with Beverly. The walks have to be moderate, but the drives in the early morning and late afternoon are all revelations of beauty such as haunt one's dreams. There is a very attractive side to the social qualities of the town as well. The few hotels are filling with summer visitors, and the promenades are bright with summer gowns in which a wider latitude is allowed than in the larger cities. The station presents an unwonted scene of activity, and the road to Mount Sardis during the late afternoon is quite a procession. The Halfords drive up one day and take dinner at the Glenloch. Miss Hilliard is delighted with this odd eyry as it seems, perched upon the foundation of three mountainous peaks that some convulsion of nature appears to have united.

They are asked out to tea and to several "evenings," which means some music, a little dancing for those so inclined, and a good share of talking. Conversation has not gone out of date here. There is something fresh and piquant about Miss Hilliard, but it is a delicate piquancy that allures rather than startles. She betrays a wide acquaintance with the best authors; her opinions are trenchant, and carry with them the impress of sound thinking. Of the real world of fashion she knows but little: she has a convent-like simplicity, an honesty far removed from rudeness. She has not dallied with her subjects, but mastered them. They have served to entertain her in many an hour that would otherwise have been dreary. So she

proves attractive to the older men, to the women who have intellectual proclivities. There are subjects on which she could never agree with her hostesses, and she has too large a soul to requite their kindly efforts with carping criticism, or attack their pretty theories with the battle-axe of uncompromising truth. Even in her own quiet home she has learned that the world is wide, that the uses of all things are infinite, that a butterfly may give pleasure where an industrious bee would only inspire terror.

Norman Winterburne has fallen upon a kind of flattering appreciation as well. He is of the old Bradley stock, he has a fine business-like presence, he is one of the partners in a promising concern, and holds in his hands a secret of his own inventing that gives him a rather mysterious prestige. Certainly he has Mr. Sayre's esteem. So, if he chose to come in and reap a harvest of appreciation, the golden grain is ripe for the social sickle. Indeed, he makes a venture or two rather against his will, for he would enjoy an evening on the porch at Bradley House better, but he will not be churlish.

The Bradleys remain away two days beyond their time, and Miss Hilliard defers her departure, really nothing loath, for these people interest her very much. She has so few family relatives within visiting distance that her experiences of women have been gathered chiefly at hotels. She has made no really intimate friends — her illness and her misfortune happening at a time when youthful interest is at its most ardent stage. A few correspondences that have come through her work, and Winterburne's descriptions, when he has been in a talkative mood, which was a much more general occurrence than it is now. For this last year he has been so engrossed with business projects, with an absolute desire to make money. Hitherto, they have been good comrades, both earnest and eager to take a hand in the world's reformation. The fortune has come to him as unexpectedly as her capacity came to light with her.

It is a little strange to return to the rather unattractive spot they have elected to make their present home. Lois gives Miss Hilliard a quiet but fervent welcome.

"Why, you don't look fagged out," she says on strict examination. "When I heard of so much junketing round and out half the night, I just said to myself the best of 'em haven't any sense to spare. She'll throw away all she's gained, and it'll take weeks to set her on her feet again stiddy as she was before. For it almost seemed to me as if in a little while you'd take to going round like ord'nery folks, without even a little speck of a halt."

Alice laughs. The pain and sensitiveness about the halt died out long ago. When she could first discard her crutch for short intervals she considered herself a fortunate being, and now she is quite happy since she need not use it scarcely at all if she is careful.

"I am afraid the 'little speck' will always remain. I have junketed round, I must confess. My dear Lois, I've been having just a lovely time! I felt quite like a real young girl—like the Halfords. Do you know what I shall do when I settle to spinsterhood in good earnest? Of course I must make a fortune—I've learned that nothing can be done in this world without money"—

"The cup of cold water," interrupts Lois with a kindly severe air.

"We will have a well and station some one at the gate with a tin dipper. No one shall depart thirsty or hungry or cold. But inside, in the house beautiful, I shall gather young girls, pretty, dainty, delicate girls, poorly equipped for the battle of life, and make a real home, a real family, care for them, educate them, and train them to some of the finer uses of life. Girls like Cynthia and Perdita Halford give me a hungry feeling—as if I were tired of being alone and wanted sisters. Only there's so much to do, so many plans, and the fortune to make and all—that I'll have to wait for some of the things."

"Hmf!" Miss Strong makes this exclamation with a decisive down breath like the hard stroke of a pen, but does not open her mouth. If the sound were given full play, it would become a word, an ordinary expletive, but she does not allow it the chance. It is cut off short, sharp.

"Well, you *must* have been in the air-castle business to think up all that!" with an expression of disdain. "And they'll all marry and go off and leave you, and you'll be ten times lonelier than if you'd never had 'em," says Miss Strong triumphantly, yet with a tint of jealousy in the depths of her soul.

Miss Hilliard stands up straight and resolute with a kind of tender defiance in her eyes, and a smile on her lips. The eyes are bright and soft with no purple shadows under them, and there is a tint of bloom in her cheeks.

"Well, I'm thankful to the Lord that you haven't come home sick, as I made sure you would." There are some lines in her face that savor of regret and amuse Miss Hilliard. "Or maybe, I said to myself, she won't come at all, but'll want the whole caravan moved over to Beverly, just as she's got it — straightened out here."

"It has a kind of homey look. And it's more convenient for Norman. But it isn't as beautiful as Beverly."

"That Mr. Armitage has been here twice. Yesterday — thinking you would be home" —

"Yes," Miss Hilliard says musingly. She has asked him to come and talk over some of the best methods for the enlightenment of Warwick. It seems so strange to take up the old trains of thought after all this pleasurable confusion. Has she been sojourning in Vanity Fair?

She changes her travelling gear and puts on a soft, white gown with some clinging laces. She has all a woman's fondness for dainty attire, be it ever so simple. Then she peers into all the rooms, takes a rather longing look at the shaded porch, comes in reluctantly and sits down to her desk to answer some business letters and look over her neglected belongings. When she feels in a mood for work there is some awaiting her, not *quite* the kind in which she revels, but that seems better appreciated.

Winterburne has met her at the station, put her in the hack with her baggage, and gone back to the works. It is nearly seven when he comes in to supper, and he looks tired, a little bit dispirited. *Does* she know the reason?

But he is full of interest as to her impressions and enjoyment.

Afterward — Lois is in the kitchen washing dishes, then she will sit out on the back porch in friendly gossip with Mrs. Prall, who is quite a study to the clean-cut, well-defined Eastern woman with her industries that always have some definite end in view, even to the stocking that she is knitting.

The brother and sister saunter through the front door. Winterburne seats himself on the wooden bench at the end of the porch, stretches out his long limbs comfortably, crosses his feet, and lights his cigar. The innumerable insects are chorusing in different keys, sometimes a strident melody, then falling into a discord that is not inharmonious after all. Alice disposes herself in the hammock. When she swings a little it brings her so close to Norman that she can touch his shoulder.

"You enjoyed it all," he begins. "I was a little afraid at first — but you had a chance to get quite at home before the return of the Bradleys."

"You do not like them," she says in a definite tone.

"And you" —

"Perhaps we ought not criticise Mr. Bradley. He has a curious uncertainty about him — or did it ever strike you as acting?"

"Acting!" Winterburne exclaims in surprise. "No, I confess it has not. He would naturally be a little — well, unusual. Very few recover entirely from an attack of insanity at his time of life. And — the son?"

"He is unreal, artificial. I can't tell why, but he seems a curious compound. He has great apparent frankness: you feel that he is sometimes on the verge of an imprudence, but he never commits himself. He never even shows you any of his hopes or desires, and I think he has no aims, no real purpose to life, but a sensuous, prodigal enjoyment of the present. He seems to me a joyous, utterly unconcerned heathen on one side of his nature; on the other, dangerous. He is handsome, winning, persuasive, without

any real arguments he brings others to his way of thinking. He is very interesting as a study. I should like to know what his life has been, that part touched by outside conditions, for we can hardly call them influences. And they are all wild not to see that the child, that pretty, eager, little Perdita, adores him. Why, last night it was just like drawing a bird into a fowler's snare. I wanted to break the charm."

"Perdita! Well, he may fancy her. The relationship is not so near as to be objectionable."

Winterburne utters this with a kind of feverish eagerness, as if he was in haste to bring it to pass.

"And he cares for Regina as much as he can care for any one."

"No — not Regina!" Winterburne cries suddenly, with the tense beseechingness in his tone that pleads with the speaker to unsay his or her words.

"My poor Norman!" She reaches out her hand through the perfumed dusk, and stops her soft swaying to clasp his, that trembles with intense emotion. She can even feel the dampness that follows the sudden heat.

He makes no comment.

"It came to me in a vague way at first, as one tries to recall a dream. Then I would *not* believe it. I thrust it out" — he can feel the corresponding motion of her hand, of which she is unaware. "But last night" —

"Yes," he responds, rising suddenly, and beginning to pace the porch. *He* felt it last night. He was torn with a demon of jealousy. Even now his soul seems to writhe as it did then, when a consciousness came over him, not that Jasper cared for her, — a hundred men might care; but that she inclined in some intangible manner to him.

"I can't understand" — Alice says it almost piteously, the confirmation of her fear is so hard to bear. "If it were some different kind of woman, noble, sweet, and tender, and with the irresistible grace that some are dowered with who are remarkable for nothing else, but — what have you seen in her, Norman, besides the stately beauty, and — yes,

a kind of elegance, a pretence at things, not the real qualities themselves."

"Don't," he cries hoarsely, pausing at that end of his march. "You are unjust. You do not understand her."

There is a pang transfixing Alice Hilliard's soul. It has come suddenly, like so much rending knowledge. She has never questioned how long she should reign supreme in his generous soul. She has expected him to marry sometime. She has dreamed of children growing up, nurtured by the affection of one of the best and kindest of parents. His wife was not so clearly defined, but she was to be brave, sweet, adoring, everything it seems to her that Regina Halford is not.

He takes another turn and comes back to where she sits motionless.

"I was hasty," he says in an entreating tone. "But you know so little about her."

"How long have you been studying her, Norman?"

She asks the question in a sympathetic manner.

"Back in that old time. Ah, she was heroic then."

"And you have loved her all this while? Norman, you should have tried then,—if you cared so much."

"Just when I cared the most this fortune came to her."

It is a paltry evasion in that it does not tell the whole truth. He is not in the habit of misleading, but how can he have *her* blamed for what she did innocently?

"I see," Alice begins presently. "It is you who are heroic, Norman."

"No; I hoped sometime to meet her again. I wanted to make myself"—he would say worthy, but Alice will resent this. "I had ambitious dreams of a fortune, you see," with a weak, forced laugh, used only to point the sentence. "And I was very much engrossed, going hither and yon, and trying experiments."

"You have the fortune now. You need not wait for that," she says with a bitterness new to her.

"You think—I might try?" He catches at the straw.

"If you *will* have my honest opinion, I do not think she

cares for any one. She has been setting her life in a pretty parterre, hedging herself about with forms and limitations, with certain suggestions that she takes for ideas, certain beliefs she has moulded into the kind of truths that are pleasant to entertain, that never cut deep into one's vanity. Whether she can be roused to a grand, central, vivifying aim is a question. She impresses me as a person whom the mint, anise, and cumin will satisfy; a woman who can adorn an elegant home in a dignified and correct manner, who will feast herself and offer to those about her the dainty perfumes of the garden of culture, who will hover around the great truths, but never dip deep into them if they have rough edges or present an unpleasant front. She should be a rich man's wife, a society woman in a little larger circle than Beverly, yet not so large that she cannot be its centre. ~~She~~ He is shaping her life to this end. She may be intense under certain circumstances, but she knows nothing of that larger, finer diffusiveness that sheds around rays of blessed happiness. Norman, what could you do with" — yes, let her say it — "such a wife?"

"Why" — with a tremulous, feverish laugh that is neither pleasure nor amusement — "*I may be a rich man some day.*"

"If you desire to be taken at that estimate!" Is he indeed so beguiled with her that merely to know that she was his would satisfy him? He is much too dear for her to despise; he is under some mysterious spell that *must* lift presently. "And what of the old plans and hopes?" she cries feverishly, a pathos of disappointment in her tones. "We were to try a little of the lifting up of the great shadow that darkens so much of the world."

He pauses abruptly, resumes his seat, draws her close enough to take both hands and clasps them tightly.

"No," he returns; "I have not forgotten any aims or plans. I have talked some of them over with Armitage, and he thinks I'm too radical, so it's not likely that I have been turned from my purpose;" and he gives a cheerful laugh. "There's enough to do here, Heaven knows, and

when I've been wishing to have my little tug at the work, I should be an ingrate to creep away at the outset. If I have prosperity here, some of it belongs naturally to the place, the sort of tithing the old Jews made so much of. In a big city *we* would hardly count. No, you will have no chance to accuse me of apostasy."

It comforts her a little. Still, how he is to reconcile the two lives —

"I had no idea *she* was there," he resumes, nodding his head toward the distant town. "I should have had a presentiment if clairvoyant tales were true. Remember, you had a hand in it, for hunting up the fortune brought me to her sooner than I should have gone myself."

She remembers that he quite derided the idea at first, having a sturdy desire to work out his own fortune. If she had not insisted! Were all these events arranged from the beginning?

She cannot bring herself to an harmonious accord with the outlook. Yet she has resolved that whenever she should come into contact with the wider world, to recognize at once the infinite variety of character and capability, and accommodate herself to the fact that all cannot be measured by the one standard. Regina is a beautiful and stately palm in the select garden of girls, but one cannot reasonably look for the fragrance of violets. Her ambitions will lead her up to serene heights, but will Winterburne thrive in that artificial atmosphere? Her soul cries out in protest.

"I hoped," he begins, "I made sure you would admire her; that somehow you would feel at home with them" —

She crushes down a sisterly jealousy, the sudden protest affection always makes at being superseded, then a torrent of tenderest pity sweeps over her. He will not win this prize for which his ardent soul longs. She has discerned no mysterious softening in Regina Halford's eyes.

"I do like them. I should be ungrateful if I did not appreciate the kindly manner in which they have taken me to their hearts. And you know, you must know, Nor-

man, that your happiness is my first desire. I have always hoped you would marry, and if it is to be in this way, I shall even wish you Godspeed."

He has a fancy that women's differences of opinion seethe and settle if one gives them time, but he is touched by her yielding so unexpectedly.

"You are the most generous of women," and he kisses her fondly. "I am glad to have you know it. Yet I haven't much hope to go upon. I have never studied the mysterious power that attracts women. I suppose Jasper Bradley has it" — admitting this somewhat reluctantly.

"Jasper Bradley *does* attract. He is a curious study. He has a passion for admiration, — the desire women are credited with to be approved, to be offered an incense of delicate flattery. There is nothing vulgar or crude about it. From oldest to youngest, from beauty to plainness, he seems to gather sweetness as a bee does honey. And it is this quality that makes him dangerous. I suppose he would please most women by that charming deference, the assumption of frankness that seems to say, 'If I *had* a secret, you would be the depositary, you alone.' It is flattering."

"And you think Perdita" —

"It is dangerous to any impressionable girl. Her love for music amounts to a passion, though she doesn't seem to care for performing herself. But when he plays she retires into a rapt world of her own, and enjoys it quite to herself. She does not understand it. I do not believe she even dreams of love. But it will conquer her in an evil moment. She is a sweet, impulsive child; her very gayety gives her a superficial air. Do you imagine they will go on staying at Bradley House? When is that to be settled?"

"Whenever Jasper Bradley chooses, or the heirs demand their share. I could not very well, you see, without appearing in an unenviable light. And there is no real necessity."

They lapse into silence. They are quite used to silence as well as conversation. Both have many subjects to think

of, one all-absorbing. Winterburne soon wanders off into it. There has been the past ten days a mysterious grace about Regina, not softness, not any nearer encouragement, still it *has* encouraged him. It may be possible to win her if — Oh, no, he cannot imagine her marrying Jasper Bradley. She may have a quick appreciation of his grace and manifold charms, his numerous gifts, and that wide acquaintance with certain phases of the world. It is a kind of outside knowledge; why, one could gain as much from books. The real vital culture of study is lacking. She is young and ambitious, full of theories too. He can see that. Well, he has ambitions and theories, so why should he cavil. Down at the bottom of all the fascinating disquiet and passionate aims lies the soul of the real woman. For at twenty, one has not sounded the whole octave. And Winterburne has the incomprehensible faith of a high and pure love, with a large, serene awaiting.

Alice meanwhile is thinking of his awakening, which will be very slow, but when the blow does come, his very soul will stagger under its travail. If she felt certain Regina would never be won to look upon him with the semblance of love, she could be content. Then he would be convinced of his mistake. But Regina may be won by the attractions he will be able to offer presently, for she can foresee that he will become a rich man. It is the slow, cruel process of disillusion brought into one's daily life that she fears, the bitter awakening from a dream.

"Norman," she begins again, "do not think me captious or unkind about your relatives. I like them all in certain ways. No one could enter a strange household and give to each one the same measure of regard. First impressions have certain virtues, but one finds occasion to modify them. They are all generous" — is she so sure of Jasper Bradley? — "they care more for kinship than for the fortune, and one doesn't always find that. We shall be warm friends. The girls are quite up to the average. I think Cynthia has a great deal of promise."

"Cynthia," he comments with a soft laugh. "I have an *idea* they do not consider her the flower of the flock."

"Of course they all bow down to Regina. She has the certain intangible authority of a leader, and the power of beauty. But I think Cynthia and I shall fraternize. Already she has come to paying me the adoration a young girl is apt to lay on the shrine of an elder woman" —

"You are not old," he interrupts protestingly.

"No one has relegated me to old age," and she gives two or three mirthful notes. "All the same, I have just tripped over the first quarter of the century. That has an ancient, ominous sound. And at thirty Cynthia will still be a young girl, just dipping into the mysteries of life."

"I am glad you like her." If she is not the rose, she may still carry about suggestions of it.

"Why, I like them *all*. But Cynthia is coming to stay a week with me. None of the others made me so generous an offer."

"I must get you a pony-carriage and an old cob that is not above browsing by the roadsides. If we are not beautiful, there are lovely drives hereabout."

"How good you are!" She presses his hand softly. Only a few discriminating souls will ever get at the depth of his tenderness.

"I've been thinking all the week whether it really wasn't a mistake, pitching my tent here. There is no real social life; at least, there cannot be for you. The farming people are stolid and unintellectual. The better class of working-people, the foremen and superintendents, have come up from the ranks, and the women are in the transition stage between ignorance and pretence. Some of them even do not reside here. I haven't been about much, but of the two I have found the 'lower classes' more attractive."

"No, it is not a mistake." Regina Halford shall not change the *motif* of his life if *she* can help it. "It is the place we have talked about, the place where there was a great work to do, and we need not begin by sighing after the soft clothing and king's palaces," she says spiritedly.

"But you can't think. I never saw such dense ignorance in any of our little towns. It is even worse than

regular factory towns. There is so much brawn, rude, brutish force. Perhaps the work and the roughness of the country have something to do with it. And so much drunkenness; not the fiery, fighting kind of the large cities, but the brutish, sodden sort."

"Then *we* must fight," she says earnestly. "You know we have not counted on the elegances of the great world. We were not going to be bishops in gowns of lawn and silk, but simply evangelists, with a little good news for some desolate corner of the earth overlooked by others."

"And we had not counted on a fortune either. Even outside of this Bradley bequest, I shall doubtless pile up some wealth," and he laughs a little. "So you need not go in sackcloth nor sit in ashes from necessity. It *is* quite different from our first crude plans."

Back in the early years she had an heroic ideal of a clergyman's life for him, but he had not fitted into the niche of her ardent hopes. Then she had come to realize that there were fields of work, harvest seasons with the grain falling all about, rusting, decaying, going utterly to waste, because there were no reapers. Every soul had some sheaves to gather, and tall grasses often grew in out-of-the-way corners until choked up with weeds.

"We shall have all the more responsibility," she returns in a grave yet decisive tone. She will not give up her hold on this tender, generous, manly soul. No other woman's pretty white fingers shall fritter it away to vain uses.

CHAPTER XII

A TURN OF FORTUNE

I am in plainer words a bundle of prejudices made up of likings and dislikes. — GRAY.

NORMAN WINTERBURNE has spent his whole morning bargaining with Reuben Finter for the strip of ground adjoining his recent purchase. Finter had been extremely curious at first, anxious and over-reaching.

"You've bin a-perspectin', I s'pose, 'n found iurn," in his country vernacular.

"I have not prospected to any great extent, not on that line at all. The whole country around is rich in iron, but not always in paying quantities. We have found a new vein in one of the mines, but the iron is not of the best quality. No doubt there may be a good deal in the mountain, but it would be hard to get at. There is your offer; take it or let it alone."

With that, Winterburne turns half impatiently. The man is hard pressed for money, and this is a generous offer. But if he cannot get the land, he will open his own tract and learn the results.

"See here, now, don't go off 's if there wasn't anuther minnit. We hain't talked this thing down ter bottom by a long shot. Ef ther's iurn" —

"Well, we'll say there is. I'm buying iron lands at my own risk. If you want to work it" —

"Couldn't, nohow. Hain't the time — ner money. An' Chris Decker's land jines mine 'n is in fust-rate order. I'd be a fool to hold onto that 'n not find any iurn when I could be raisin' truck. Ye see" —

"Good-day," and Winterburne starts decisively.

"Hello," calls Finter, jumping from the fence on which

he has been sitting, and taking a short, breathless run. "I've about made up my mind" —

Winterburne turns for the twentieth time. He looks the small, wrinkled, sun-dried man square in the face.

"Yes, Decker's land 'll do me the most good 'les there *is* iurn; but" —

"Jump in. We will discuss it going down to Warwick. Then a deed can be made out at once. It's cash down."

"I like to consider a p'int well afore I scrunch round on it very much."

"You've had two weeks to consider. You could have prospected," says Winterburne sharply.

"Well, I did, Jake Widman an' me, an' ther darned curis magnet was on a hop 'n skip all ther time. Ther's iurn, but's everywhere. Can't hardly go amiss of it here at Hazens. But you run your own resk" —

"Yes," briefly.

"He ain't quite sure," ruminates Finter. "He'd be more rushin' 'n anxious-like; 'n people do say he was a fool to pay sech a price fer Bradley's, but that ther was all in the fam'ly. Young fellers are sp'iled with sech a lot o' money comin' sudden-like 'n are mighty free sowin' it broadcast. 'N I could get that Decker land."

The sight of the check and the three hundred dollars down, that Winterburne had taken to "bind the bargain," did bind it finally. The deed was made out. The property had been in the Finter family for a century, so there was little fear of its being disputed. And at last the business was concluded, each man going his way.

"If ther's lots of iurn 'n it's good stuff I shell feel 's if I'd bin the bigges' sort of fool!" is Reuben Finter's parting declaration.

"I've frankly admitted the fact of the iron," is Winterburne's laughing rejoinder as they part.

The deed was sent off at once for recording. When Winterburne felt this was an accomplished fact, he started out to Hazens one morning with two men and the needed implements. He had traversed the ground at various times,

and located two places that he had decided to open. Both were on the Bradley estate. But it seemed to him the general trend came from the north-east; if so, he was quite secure. Then at an interval it seemed to change again. He smiled a little as he thought of the "resk."

Matters were going wonderfully well with them. Dale and Graniss felicitated themselves upon the "streak of luck" that had sent Winterburne within their ken at such a time. Orders were flowing in upon them, and the quality of the iron had improved greatly. The new process aided immensely.

"Ten years of this kind of success will make up for a man's whole life," said Dale.

"And give him a chance to retire to his farm, like that old Roman — what was his name? — come home from war" — And Graniss looked helplessly puzzled.

"There wasn't any farm this side of the world when I come home from war," returned Dale with a touch of retrospection as he began to chew a bit of stick. Periodically he gave up tobacco for "Martha's sake," poor, hopeful Martha who had been trying to cure him of the habit since their days of courtship. When matters went well with him he provided his numerous pockets with stray slivers of pine, but in his darker hours he returned to the consolation of the weed. "I've often thought what a fool I was, not to go out then and take up government land. A man might have struck something. But there was Martha and all her kin, and a man somehow hankers after his native soil. I was born up among these mountains."

"Well, you've struck it now, if no bad luck comes and prices don't drop too much. Winterburne's ore came out pretty well, only it's deep mining. I wonder what he will find at the new place?"

"He's a chap of the most curious streaks I ever saw — worse than a mineral lead;" and Dale laughed.

"He has the streak that makes money."

"Well, now, he doesn't seem to have made much use of his early years," returned Dale thoughtfully. "Some people

are born to luck, and when the time comes, there it is. One of the poorest and most shiftless men I ever knew — hung around after my wife's sister five or six year, then went off to Michigan, and, gad! if he didn't get rich — found a copper mine good as gold. I guess Liz was sorry then she hadn't waited."

The two men, who had been business partners for the last seven years often indulged in a little retrospection when they were not too much engrossed, and it generally began with their young comrade Winterburne. They give him his own head, sure of his not getting far out of the way.

"'Twould be queer now if he just lighted on something else," said Graniss musingly. "Then we shall be sure the luck is with him."

The luck, if that is it, *is* with him. Under his directions the men have broken the ground. He takes a hand with the pick, and studies the *débris* that is thrown up. Down about four feet, one of the men comes upon a solid layer with unmistakable indications. The opening has to be widened. An irregularly shaped seam of sienite, mingled with grains of magnetic ore and various other minerals, meets their expectant eyes.

"You're in luck, master!" exclaims the brawny Lancashire man. "How's happen theer's bin no eyes sharp enow to cast up that, an' tha a-traipsen back an' furth an' rattlin' 'er magnet, as it were ghaist shaken? Kim an' look at thet now!"

Winterburne recognizes the find. "Go on," he says a little huskily.

They uncover the vein for several feet, but they go beyond the Bradley boundaries before its width is reached. The *débris* is removed with fresh ejaculations. Winterburne comes forward with his rule.

"Na, na, master, we're na gotten to tha end;" and the workmen grin at each other. "Tha's fund the best one yet, an' surfis workin's cheap."

Well, he has defrauded no one. It has been a lucky hazard, a rather unusual combination of circumstances.

He wanted Bradley's to come up to the old price; he would have laid it all at Mrs. Halford's feet if he could. And he regrets a little that he cannot share his good fortune with them.

They do presently arrive at a bed of gneiss rock. The measurement is eleven feet. What the length may be is beyond any present calculation.

"Now," says Winterburne, "let us take out some ore at once, and fill the wagon. There will be time between this and night. Braxton, you go and order the car to remain, or to return if it has gone in."

For the tracks have been repaired, and the hand-cars take in the iron.

When they reach home the last man has gone from the furnace. The great space is full of pigs of the latest casting. Dale is puttering about in the fashion considered as belonging chiefly to women.

"You've struck it!" he says to Winterburne.

The man addressed laughs genially.

"I've not made a bad bargain, I think. A few days ago I bought Finter's bit of land on the mountain-side. Half the vein at least is there."

"Dang it, man! you were born for luck!" and Dale stabs the ground with an iron bar near by.

"Wait until the furnace gives a verdict," he replies with a sort of boyish carelessness, yet the under strata in his tone is hope.

That is done the next day. The analysis surprises Dale, who has seen so many specimens tried in the fiery furnace. There is no sulphur, very slight traces of phosphoric acid, little insoluble matter, and assays over eighty per cent of pure metal. It is certainly a most fortunate find, unless it comes to some sudden and mysterious end.

"I've known of such misadventures," annotates Graniss in a grave fashion.

But when the bed is fairly uncovered, they are all astonished at its promise. For thirty yards or so it lies level as a floor, then a very slight dip begins. How deep it may be,

can only be proved on trial. It is so much better than what they have been using that the miners are sent out immediately, and the road to Hazens is a regular caravan.

Two people hear of this find with a sense of dismay. One is Jasper Bradley. To his intense chagrin, he learns that he and his expert have really missed the place, though with so many indications of iron sown broadcast, it certainly would be hard to guess in this blindfold way which would be profitable to work. And, after all, the vein does not lie altogether in the Bradley land.

Regina and Cynthia have been to tea and croquet down in the town. Jasper has come for them, a little late, as his father has had a bad turn.

He is a great favorite at these small gatherings. There is a magnificent moon, so glowing and intense that it has shamed the stars from the very heavens. The faint zephyrs are laden with fragrance; there is no dew, and the young people flit to and fro over the short, thick turf that is like an emerald carpet. Jasper allows himself to be enticed into a game. Regina is not playing; but as she watches his poses, — his sinuous movements that seem to her like graceful variations in a melody, — a curious feeling creeps over her, as if, looking long enough, one might become enchanted. Bits of weird stories flit vaguely through her mind, but half-remembered; a gay, graceful faun or an old-time Greek Ganymede. He not unfrequently takes her to some mystic, alien world, as she watches him or listens to his playing. When he is near, when he looks at her, talks to her, the charm ceases to work; when he touches her hand, draws her arm through his in walking, or bends over her when she is painting or playing at the piano, there is a very fine sense of repulsion. But hers is an extremely reticent nature, more sensitive to the repellent forces than the attractive.

It is past ten when they start to walk home. The night is so exceptionally fine, and they are all fond of strolling along under the half shading of the trees.

"I wonder," says Jasper Bradley in his delicate fashion,

which is unmistakably tinged with a slight bitterness now, "if I have a bit of news for you, — that your cousin Winterburne is in luck."

"In luck?" questions Cynthia with a crescendo accent of good-humored surprise.

"Yes; he has done us all out of another fortune mayhap. Did I not tell you, Regina," — the stately girl winces at this familiar use of her name, but he only ventures upon it in the unreserve of family confidence, — "that there was some deeper reason for his desiring that property at Hazens than mere sentiment?"

"There was business also. He expected to work the mines. He made no secret of that," she says coldly. She must be impartial to keep her own self-esteem.

"Oh, yes, business!" contemptuously. "What a pity we have not business heads as well! He knew the secret."

"What great secret? Is it a gold-mine or an oil-well? I have not heard of either taking root in this region. Or perhaps a diamond belt; black, of course;" and Cynthia laughs lightly.

"It is what will prove as valuable, perhaps, — a magnificent vein of iron of the finest quality."

"Oh, iron! Doesn't everybody find iron once in a lifetime?"

You can tell by the tone that Cynthia's small nose is elevated.

"Yes, Iron with a very large I. It is not to be despised, Miss Cynthia. I met the Hoopers as I came down, and we walked a few squares together. The elder one, James, had been over to Warwick. Everybody is amazed that it should have lain under their very noses all these years. And he has bought some adjoining ground — you see the shrewdness of the man! The vein laps over on that. The person who sold it, one of the slow-going, sleepy old farmers, is almost distracted."

"Well, if no one thought to search for it all these years, I do not see how they can blame him," says Cynthia decisively.

"Why, no one does *blame* him," Regina comments in a clear, incisive tone.

"I don't know about that. I think the old farmer isn't running over with praise. It doesn't seem — fair!" and Jasper gives two or three notes of a scornful laugh.

"We took our time to consider. We balanced the chances. If there had been no new beds found, if the old ones had proved as poor as they have been considered for some years, we should not expect to make any sort of amends for his bad bargain. Of course he would not ask it," she declares proudly. She will do him full justice.

"He knew what he was about. We did not," Jasper answers with a sneer.

"Well, what can we do?" asks Cynthia with exasperating amusement. "Can we get back our land, our beds of iron, our stores of hidden wealth?"

"No; more's the pity."

"It is one of those happenings that we may set down to fate," says Regina, beginning to tire of the discussion, and resolved to be perfectly fair to the fortunate man. She cannot believe Winterburne took any undue advantage; in her secret heart she knows he did not. They have enough for comfort, and she has a vague misgiving that a large fortune would be put to no better use in Jasper Bradley's hands, if, indeed, it would be of as much service to him personally. For Jasper has moods of such unwise lavishness, that only necessity will check. And they can get along, though it is harder for them since theirs is the largest household. There seems something derogatory to her in this desire for mere money. She likes best the fine old families where it seems never to get mentioned as the great factor; where life flows on serenely. She has remarked already that it is mostly parvenus and people of no breeding who bring their money continually to the fore.

"I cannot take it as calmly as you," returns Jasper. "I wish we *had* made a greater effort."

No one echoes the desire. They go on in silence until

they have climbed the hill, and reached the familiar porch bathed in silvery rays. How calm and lovely it all is! Why should there be such strifes and envyings in the world? Fortunately she, Regina, does not envy Winterburne in the least, she thinks with her high, proud soul. If any one, it would be Miss Hilliard with her privilege of carrying out some of her aims. Just now Regina's life looks purposeless to her, and she can almost echo Cynthia's cry as to the future.

Beverly is quite as excited over the find as if Winterburne had been one of her own citizens. In a certain sense he is an offspring of the place. Mr. Sayre has spoken of him in the highest terms of commendation. Why he should be content to cast his lot in with that wretched town, when Miss Hilliard could adorn other circles, is rather puzzling. Everybody of note has wanted to get out of Warwick as soon as possible.

Reuben Finter metaphorically tears his hair. He has purchased his coveted farming lands, so he cannot bring back the money and demand that the bargain shall be annulled, — a proceeding he thinks ought to be perfectly feasible. His passionate argument served to amuse the townsfolk. Certainly for this and one other reason Winterburne finds himself unexpectedly famous, and on the high road to fortune. He has had dreams of being comfortable for himself, but he does not care for the things mere money gives. To be a gentleman of leisure, to spend his time lounging at club windows, playing cards, to indulge in polo, or a yacht, has never been the height of his ambition, — hardly found stray lodgement in his brain. To him all things must have an absolute purpose, must contribute to some other person's comfort or enjoyment. His kindness is diffusive, just as Regina's has that select refinement. She could minister to a few worthy people, who were not obtrusive, and properly grateful, but the depths, the slums, would be her abhorrence. He would take in the whole world of poverty if he could; even the unthankful and fraudulent would be sure of some pitying excuse. The point that has come nearest to self is

his passion for Regina. For her sake now he does exult a little in secret. That the desire on her part for position and all the niceties of life may derogate from a really noble character, he does not even consider.

The home-coming party find Mrs. Halford in the hammock, covered with a fleecy white shawl that defines her in the vine-shaded corner. Perdita has been listening warily for other sounds save the choruses and occasional solos of insects. She springs up suddenly and rushes down the path, shelters herself under Jasper's shoulder, and slips her warm, throbbing hand in his.

"How late you are!" she cries with a strained, impatient strand in her voice. By some fine, subtle management Perdita is rarely included in the society pleasures of her eldest cousin. She and Cynthia are free to go together — they are in the younger circle; and as Perdita has another school-year, she can hardly be considered in society.

"We were having an excited discussion up the hill, and took our walk leisurely," returns Jasper, whose arm steals around the lithe little figure, and gives it a soft pressure.

"Was anybody really excited?" Cynthia laughs. "It is not good form. You may be allowed to tell the news, Jasper."

"Oh!" exclaims Perdita indifferently.

"Your cousin three or four times removed, Mr. Winterburne, is on the high road to being a millionaire. We with our few thousands will shrink and shrivel into absolute poverty."

"Why, he can't take ours?" she cries in dismay.

"He has taken what might have been ours."

By this time they have come up on the porch. Jasper and Perdita drop on the step, as if by subtle consent. Mrs. Halford seems to rise like a soft wraith in the darkened corner.

"I think you are really unjust, Jasper," Cynthia begins earnestly. "It is as Regina said, a stroke of, — shall we call it luck or fate? It was Norman's prerogative to know that he was not making a bad bargain for himself, and we can't

blame him for using all reasonable caution. Then, he was in the business and had means of knowing or guessing. Do you remember the night Mr. Tyler told over his experience? His vein of iron promised wonderful things, and he could have sold it for a large amount, but he chose to work it himself, and presently it gave out. So we had better wait and be sure of the success of this before we begin to envy."

"We do not *envy*, I think," returns Jasper in a graciously lofty tone. "Is it admissible to feel rather disappointed when the best part of a fortune slips through your fingers? I feel myself a little to blame. I could have organized a squad of men and examined into the matter thoroughly."

Cynthia comes and leans over him, laughing gayly.

"Are you quite sure, Jasper, that you could have resisted the temptation of owning it *all* yourself? If so, you are—well, you are heroic. Poor human nature seldom gets up to the sublime."

Cynthia's shrewd thrusts come home to him closely quite often. She likes him, but he has an uncomfortable feeling that she is too downright, too utterly plain-spoken at times. She has touched upon the main point that decided him. There seemed no sufficient reason for him to purchase the property unless he knew beyond a peradventure. There was also no method of his keeping a secret to himself while he was taking the necessary steps, but he has an inward feeling that he would like to throttle his blundering expert. How could Winterburne tell by that bit of stone? for he is quite sure that decided the man.

Regina, in her soft, unemotional tone, is explaining the matter to her mother. He would like her to show some exasperation. She is the kind of woman to care for riches, he thinks. There are curious attractions about her for him. He likes her strength, her beauty, that seems to grow more perfect every day. Under all this snowy coldness may be fire enough to blaze up some time with the scarlet flame, the summer warmth of love. He would like to revel in it, to linger in the enchanted atmosphere where but one guest would be allowed.

"Has father spent a comfortable evening?" he asks, abruptly changing the subject.

"Oh, yes," says Perdita. "He sat here and talked family affairs with mother until half an hour ago. No one missed you," she adds in a lower tone — then whisperingly, "no one wanted you but me."

"Did you?" He presses the small hand again.

The brown eyes glance up at him mistily. A marvellous smile hovers about her lips, melting into soft content. It thrills him, and he longs to kiss down into its sweetness. She ministers so delightfully to one side of his nature. Admiration is a kind of mental sustenance to him, and he has had a good deal of it. Indeed, he could not exist without it.

"Why," exclaims Cynthia, coming out of a brown study, "Thursday I am to go over to Warwick — the day after to-morrow. I shall visit this wonderful pit of fortune — does it go down deep, I wonder? What a pity women do not concern themselves more with discoveries! I am tired of the endless croquet; card parties are my abomination; tennis is too like work."

"There is the botany class," suggests Regina.

"Pulling sweet flowers to pieces, to see how God made them! I have a feeling that it hurts them."

"You *can* attack geology, then. I do not believe the rocks are so sensitive."

Cynthia yawns. Her discoveries are not exactly literal, well-defined matters; rather something in Winterburne himself that compels an admiration, but she cannot explain without starting up that look of surprise in her sister's eyes so akin to disapprobation. Why does Regina dislike Winterburne, when they were such good, kindly friends in the past?

He desires now to be one of them, to have extended to him the same welcome kind of relationship that Jasper takes quite as his right. She and her mother like him cordially; Perdita is half indifferent, Regina distant, Jasper really captious. There actually was no one to accept Miss

Hilliard's invitation but herself, she remembers, though they all enjoyed her visit. If Winterburne had only settled at Beverly, or some of the pretty new places on the river! But Warwick's reputation and standing have not the aroma of high respectability, even Cynthia is forced to admit.

"We had better go to bed," she says, wishing that to-morrow was Thursday.

Regina goes within, and fastens windows, inspects the locks and bolts, though marauders are rare in this quiet place, and tramps seldom abound. Mrs. Halford follows, then Cynthia, who casts a curious glance back at the two on the step.

"Were you lonesome, Mignonne?" and the face bends lower, the cheek, cool with night wind and careless pulses, touches hers, throbbing with something besides summer heat.

"O Jasper!" with a strangling, beseeching tone.

"You might as well have walked down with me. Why didn't I think of it?" regretfully, the more so in that it is past and is no question of present consideration.

"Regina doesn't like to have mother left alone, and I am not 'big folks,'" with a scornful intonation.

"You are — just right, exquisite! To-morrow morning we will take the violin out in the woods, and imagine ourselves shepherds in Arcadie."

The face bends a trifle lower, the lips meet, then he suddenly lifts her up, and they enter the wide, dimly lighted hall. She is glowing with a thrill of delight, her brown eyes limpid, her mouth dewy sweet, her figure with pliant, yielding lines, and at that moment he goes his way, loving her, dreaming of her; simply saying good-night to the others.

Perdita is silent for very happiness, Regina from a curious sense of disquietude; so they exchange but few sentences. The tall, statuesque girl has a way of lingering over all the little touches of preparation, of brushing out her long, dusky hair, that is alike removed from the

shimmer of chestnut, and the decisiveness of black. Her toilet-table is a marvel of neatness and beauty, and she handles her dainty belongings with delicate care. She has a certain inward satisfaction of being on punctilious terms with herself that she calls respect. In spite of all this attention, her inmost soul is stirred with a distrust. She wishes she had not heard that fragment about Winterburne and his bit of ore that he considered so carefully. She can see him making journeys to Hazens, intently studying every foot of ground, poking about in the suspicious places, and testing everything carefully, of taking no step until well assured he would get his money back. If he had not put his purchase on that higher plane of sentiment, if he had just made it a business matter, and evinced a sort of selfish satisfaction in it, she could look upon it with more complacency. There is about it, to her, a kind of simulation, a perversion that savors of absolute deceit covered by an apparent frankness. This assumption of indifference to money vexes her as well. She desires to be fair, not to judge too severely; but are not the facts against it? She would like to believe him all Miss Hilliard represents, but she is too clear-eyed, too discriminating, she tells herself in a sort of self-pity.

It is perhaps the deviation from strict truth that business engenders. She is aware there are legal rights, upheld by opinion as well, that are not the highest moral rights. The rush and turmoil of business thrust aside fine distinctions, lower the strain in a man's blood that might come to something rare and noble; she tells herself with the pitiless judgment of youth, that this is inevitable. She knows enough of the real side of labor to understand how it can crowd out all the serener, loftier conjunctions of leisure and culture. And the influence is downward. By degrees one can lop off a stray branch of truth for expediency, of honor for so-called compulsion, and presently the man accepts a lower standard because it leads to the success of money-getting. Thus it comes to pass that money so often means vulgarity, *that the patrician element shrinks from the coarseness and*

ignorance of the parvenu who fancies the golden key unlocks every door. Mere money could not make headway in Beverly; she rather rejoices in the fact.

Why she should in any way trouble her mind with its delicate training about any such downright indifferent person as Norman Winterburne does not occur to her in her strenuous musings. There is a vague impression, not strong enough for desire, that she would like to see what he could do in Jasper's place — rather to have the two descendants of the old Bradleys reversed, for Morton Bradley could not have been father to Norman Winterburne, she can understand that. Jasper longs for wealth, but he would not toil and moil for it; this other one throws his whole soul in the pursuit, with no definite aims for it when it is won. Ah, how does she know?

She looks far down the expanse in the intense radiance of the night. Smoky, dingy Warwick cannot be made beautiful even by this abundant glory.

CHAPTER XIII

LOOKING THROUGH FRIENDLY EYES

It never yet did hurt
To lay down likelihoods and forms of hope.
SHAKESPEARE.

THE porch at Warwick does not command so fine a view as that at Beverly, Cynthia Halford admits as she sits there in a low rocker, crocheting some pretty silken rings of quaint device. The back of the house, with the rise of hill and stunted growth of trees, is by far more attractive. Perhaps beautiful surroundings are not so necessary to her temperament. She has had two "splendid" days, in her girlish phraseology. No one has cavilled at her; there has been no tiresome calling, no listless lounging; but "the days have been too short and the nights nothing at all," according to Mrs. Prall, who is always in arrears with her work, always groaning about it in a fashion that amuses Cynthia and disgusts Miss Strong.

"She putters so everlastingly!" declares Lois Strong. "Why, I should do up that little work in an hour or two. She hasn't any more system than an old hen who goes scratching here and there, and is led off by a stray grasshopper into forgetting what she first started about. How people can have no system at all, passes me."

Miss Strong is a new phase of womankind to Cynthia, who appreciates her good sense, and her system that has a definite purpose, an end kept clearly in view. Her oddly bright sayings, her watchful care of Miss Hilliard, and the wonderful orders she evolves from every chaos, are astonishing. Mrs. Prall is a genuine native of the soil. How she and Jason have managed to get anything like property together *is a source of amazement to more thrifty people, brought*

up in the stirring atmosphere of ambition and industry. The house and part of the land belonged originally to Mrs. Prall's father, and was willed to her, but they have added a little. Perhaps in the earlier years they were more energetic.

Cynthia leans over and looks far down the road. "They are coming," she says to Miss Hilliard, who for the last two hours has been really working at her desk. Yesterday they did nothing but meander around in the pony-carriage.

"Yes." Miss Hilliard puts away her papers with their grotesque figures and odd, strongly accented faces, comes slowly out and seats herself in a high-backed willow chair edged about with a soft, dull-red ribbon. She is in a fine white lawn that utterly repudiates starchiness. Her light hair is wound in a great coil, and a trailing spray of dainty, old-fashioned button rose is twisted in and out at one side and droops on her shoulder. She has an elegance that is very attractive, Cynthia thinks, though it is so far removed from Regina's.

"Hillo!" Winterburne exclaims with his pleasant smile. There seems nothing inelegant in the word as he uses it. "I have brought Armitage, you see. I told him now was the golden opportunity for a solemn conclave on ways and means and purposes, and that the hour of grace once gone by" —

"As there is only one hour," and Miss Hilliard rises, stretches out her hand, then turns to Cynthia. Mr. Armitage takes the visitor's hand in turn, and as the nearest chair is beside her, accepts that with a gentle inclination. Winterburne seats himself on the step, and stretches out his long limbs comfortably on the one just below.

"Can you give me no more grace than that?" inquires the young clergyman. He is a spare young fellow of medium size, with a grave face, expressing great sincerity and firmness of purpose. His eyes are rather light, but glance out steadily, kindly; his lips are firm, perhaps shut in rather formal lines with hardly enough play about them. His hair has just missed being blond, and his side-whiskers

are a very soft brown, silky and not thick. Anywhere you would know him for a clergyman by a certain reverent air and watchfulness.

"Oh, I shall not allowance any one," and she smiles cordially. "Though when I was a child we used to have a servant who was continually singing two lines of a hymn that ran this wise: —

" 'And while the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return ;'

and I used to picture to myself the consternation of a straggling procession if some one suddenly put out the lamp. Now I often wonder if the oil *will* last long enough."

"We are exhorted to work while it is day. And it seems as if the days were so full! They are never sufficient for all that comes to hand with me."

"A wrong way of taking it up, Armitage. God doesn't ask any more of a man than he can well do. He isn't to wear himself out by the middle of the forenoon. And I sometimes fancy you awfully earnest fellows do not live out half your lives. Now, I think there is something rather satisfying in a delightful old age when you have used life well and to some purpose."

"And work, like the poor, ye have always with you."

"Don't divorce the text, Miss Hilliard," says Armitage in a voice that entreats. "So many people do, and seem to make it an excuse for not undertaking greater things, as if God had said, 'Be very moderate, for you need never hope to get rid of the poor.' Instead it is, 'Whosoever ye will ye may do them good.' And that other beautiful sentence, 'He had pity on the multitude.' I wonder how Christlike we are in this."

"We are to have a little sympathy with the multitude, and to do them good in so far as we are able," says Winterburne. "And now you are to consider the greatest good. Armitage believes it to be a new pretty church," glancing at his sister, "and you think it new, wholesome houses. *I am in for a sort of town hall and gymnasium, and per-*

haps a reading-room — when they learn to read; but first they must be taken out of the saloons. Miss Cynthia, what is your idea? Come, you must add your mite. Question — What is better than beer or whiskey to the laboring man?"

Cynthia blushes scarlet. She has not been in any social discussions of this kind. Suddenly she rallies her forces and replies sententiously, 'Bread.'

"How to convert them to this way of thinking?"

"How to convert them at all?"

"You cannot convert them to everything in a given space of time," declares Winterburne. "If our experience only tallied with our expectation, it would be clear and easy sailing; but the latter rushes on in a fine steam yacht, while the former lumbers along in a slow-going canal-boat, with devious turnings. I think this is about as unpromising a place as one need strike by way of experiment. Alice and I used to build towns in our philanthropic dreams, but I don't think they were quite as hopeless as this;" and he laughs. "We always ended by converting them single-handed. Here we shall have to go in force."

"You do not really consider it hopeless?" Armitage asks in a little surprise.

"Well, not in the absolute sense of the word; but the ignorance is as dense as in the larger cities. I have been here almost half a year, and am more surprised than I was at first. I thought it rather picturesque then; I had heroic fancies."

"An attractive school for the children would do something,—a school of the industrial sort. The public school has been poorly attended: very few teachers of merit would keep positions here. The better class send their children to the private schools. And if your hall were large enough to take in a school of this sort"—Miss Hilliard pauses.

"Then, you had really planned the hall?" Armitage says.

"We had talked it over. You see, there is no rallying-point but the gin-mills; men like to talk — perhaps we all

do," with a short laugh, "and they are fond of discussing various matters: they are shrewd and humorous too. Some of them do not drink much; but how could they ask in a friend at home with the disorder and the crying babies, and the poor, tired wife whose burdens gather like a great roll of snow that we boys used to kick over and over, until presently we put the strength of our arms to it. And she puts her strength to the dish-washing, and babies, and patching clothes, and darning stockings; they never know anything to talk about either."

"But should they not be trained to consider their duties at home?" interposes Armitage. "God set them in families, and anything that weakens the tie is clearly wrong."

"There are a great many wrongs. I'm not going to argue that shifting all the burden on the poor wife is right, but I *do* maintain that you will have to put something in the place of the saloon. Until you have your man educated up to the higher lights, the grand principles, you will have to entertain him; and some people have to be entertained all their lives long."

"Because you keep bolstering up their weaknesses, insisting that the man shall depend on the crutch long after his limb is sound, simply because you will not take off the splints."

"Well," says Winterburne good-humoredly, "I'm willing to try all things, and 'hold fast of that which is good.' But were you not advised to try all things first?" and an amused light shines in his eyes; "only I don't want to throw away any ammunition, though I have a larger store than I ever imagined would befall me. And since it came to light here, and there is so much room for work, here it seems to belong naturally; for if we can't convert the heathen in this small place, how shall we have the face to arraign our brethren in the larger world?"

There is silence for a few seconds. This man, large and noble and generous as he undoubtedly is, will traverse some of the clergyman's plans; yet circumstances have brought them together in a brotherly way, and not to work

in harmonious accord would certainly hinder the highest purposes.

"Very well," Armitage says, pulling himself together mentally; "let us take the hall. We were to have some of Miss Hilliard's ideas, I believe."

"These people are different from any I have encountered before," she makes answer slowly. "It is with the young and the children that we must begin, and bring our wisdom down to their limited understanding. So many of them are foreigners, and liberty has degenerated into license. There ought to be better houses, cleaner streets, and some habits of industry established among the women, who it seems to me waste an enormous sight of time by having absolutely no methods. The hall scheme would give us a room for school purposes, and we must not undertake too much at the outset. Then—a reading-room and the beginning of a library."

"You see," announces Winterburne, "we have cast in our lot with Warwick. The mills and furnaces are here, and the mines, and I've put my interest for some years, if not for life, in it; but I really couldn't take any comfort with the misery and unthrift and evil practices staring one in the face continually. Then, too, it's been rather a romantic idea of mine and my sister's, and if we fail—Well, we shall have spent our money and our time for naught; but we have illustrious examples all along. When men are found willing to embark millions in commercial enterprises at a great risk, or with the certainty of the prosperity coming in the next generation rather than their own, ought not some few be found who will do this work for humanity?"

"You *can* find them," returns Armitage; "all they ask is standing-room: they can soon gain opportunities. You, for one, have put your shoulder to the wheel, even before you are assured of continuous prosperity, or have laid up a fortune."

"To win great glory with at my death," and he laughs lightly. "No, I shall have the comfort of spending some

of it now. Those who wish to fight over the matter will have to come and fight squarely to my face."

"You'll have enough of that, never fear. When you begin to run counter to the generally received opinions, there is enough fighting."

"Within and without, on the one side and the other. The side you desire to benefit protests that it is no advantage to them, and the lookers-on declare they, the people, the lowest classes as we call them, can only be stirred up to dissatisfaction."

"And though you don't believe it, Winterburne, here is where religion *does* come in and preserve the balance; without it we should have anarchy, the most rampant socialism. It is among the Christianized people that the improvement of all kinds has been the greatest. Look over the world and that will tell you."

"I am ready to admit that Christianity is the most important factor, and the noblest in all religions is the near approach to Christ's teachings; but somehow we seem to lose so much of the grand simplicity as we go on."

There is a diversion by Lois calling them in to supper. Winterburne and his friend disappear to his convenient dressing-room, and emerge much refreshed; for the day has been hot and dusty. The table looks inviting with its numerous viands, its berries, and quaint jars of flowers, the former sufficiently antique to be priceless. They drop their graver discussion, and spice their feast with gayety in its most charming and elusive form, which contribution is enriched by Cynthia.

Afterward they look over the plan for the hall. A wide stairway divides it in two complete parts. There is to be a hall for meetings, two reading-rooms, and one pleasant, sunny apartment for the school. If they cannot aim at elegance, they can make it attractive to the men who must bring their pipes and smoke."

Armitage makes a protest. "They ought to be expected to pay sufficient respect to the place to refrain from smoking an hour or two."

"I have heard a most excellent reason why Mahomet went to the mountain," and Winterburne laughs. "What sacrifice they may be induced to make a year or two hence I cannot tell; at present they will go where they smoke."

"And the others to whom smoking may be disagreeable?"

Winterburne laughs. "We have yet to find them, I think. The small youth takes to it naturally. The wives do not seem to mind it. Out of hours their time *is* their own, and they will not endure any restrictions upon their liberty at present. But we could have another room up-stairs. When a man is sufficiently heroic to waive an indulgence for an hour or two, he will not mind mounting one pair of stairs. You see, the whole thing will be very plain. At present it need not be on an extensive scale. If it is a success, it can be enlarged. Land is cheap anywhere about Warwick, but of course it must be near the centre. There's a corner on Main and Cedar Streets that would be a good location."

"Yes; excellent. And you intend to begin at once?"

"Why not? It ought to be done for winter gatherings. A nice, warm room would prove attractive. And a gymnasium must be fitted up with some of the more simple appliances. That would call in the boys straying around on destructive raids. Dale thinks them a bad lot. No doubt they are. Try your hand on them, Armitage."

"I shall, most assuredly. I had been thinking of some such interest in connection with church work. But there's a curious, narrow feeling here, I find. Even among the members, a church seems simply a Sunday resort."

"You'll have to educate the people up to a knowledge of what religion really is, Armitage. Alice and I have been amused at many of the definitions. All seem to agree that it is something you get, and, having once obtained it, no further effort is necessary. Our worthy Mrs. Prall is strong upon election, logical too," and Winterburne laughs. "She can't be quite sure that Jason is elected. He has gone through several revivals and still remains unconverted. And Jason has an idea that if it *is* to come, it will happen

sometime. They have settled into a curious complacency. I have observed it in several others. It is much more difficult to unlearn than to learn. Lois has taken them up in true missionary spirit. I sometimes think she has but one article in her creed: 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.'"

"If it is the right whatsoever," appends Armitage. He, too, has theories, and he has come here hoping to do a good work, since no one could accuse him of seeking either position or emoluments. Yet he finds himself curiously at loss sometimes.

After they have gone over all the questions, and settled to view the land of their promise to-morrow, Alice turns to the piano and plays some of the quaint old hymns, and they all sing, simply for their own pleasure. Mrs. Prall comes to the kitchen window and listens.

"I declare for it, that's jest like a little bit of heaven!" leaning her arms on the sill and looking at Lois. "They do sing so satisfyin' like, with no flourishes or drawlin's, and runnin' over words time and agin, till you kin hardly tell what 'twas at first. And that young minister is such a nice appearin' man. I'd like to hear him preach, but they do say he ain't very sound in the faith."

Lois gives her favorite sign of contempt.

"My opinion is, some of 'em won't be found very sound in works when they come to be weighed in the balance at the last; ev'n with all their faith thrown in."

"You do have some queer idees, Mis' Strong. Faith's faith, an' there ain't no gettin' round it."

Mrs. Prall always comes back to first principles, whether her controversies are long or short.

Winterburne walks down the road with his friend for some distance. He likes Armitage, for he discerns a fine honor and great tenderness under the formalisms in which he has been trained, and an earnest desire to do some work for the poor and neglected. He has sounded old Mr. Purvis, and found that his radical ideas rather shocked the slow-going man, who leaves a great deal to what he calls

an overruling Providence, and considers his duty done in plentiful exhortations. There must be some one to keep him in countenance, and he has thus settled upon the younger man.

"Armitage," he says as they are parting, "when you think there is a real call for something new in the way of a church building, when your place gets too strait, you are to let me know, if I don't find it out for myself. Heaven speed you, my friend. There is plenty of room for all kinds of work in this world."

Cynthia is still loitering on the porch, and gives Winterburne a bright smile with her good-night. Ah, if he only were Jasper! If they could have him, with his hearty, wholesome interest in all things. She does so enjoy a purpose, even in rather trivial concerns.

Every day she and Miss Hilliard go about the town a little. There are some sick people, some old folks neglected by their kind, to whom a touch of good cheer is better even than the sunshine. And the next day they go slowly through Main Street. The lower end by the mills is inexpressibly vile, with beer-shops in every square. Then it becomes a little decenter, with better-class houses, though they are untidy enough, with their broken fences, their chickens and geese and pigs. And here is the corner, a great bare spot with a diagonal path across it, and the scanty herbage nipped close, even where it has had the courage to grow.

"I do think I'd like it farther out," says Miss Hilliard. "But it wouldn't be so central, and Norman's theory is, that you must go to meet these people; that they will rarely come to you. That isn't the generally received opinion. Most people stand on guard, they are so afraid of some one crowding in."

Cynthia smiles, mostly to herself. All this is so different from her life hitherto, this poverty is unlike anything in their brief experience. How Regina would shrink in disgust! yet in some respects Miss Hilliard is quite as fastidious, quite as neat in her personal care and surroundings.

Cynthia feels so at home with her, and is continually gathering up new ideas of the rightful purposes of living. Each day deepens her regard for Winterburne. She can hardly believe he is the same young fellow who used to drop in their little parlor and talk quietly to their mother, or puzzle himself over the nonsensical chatter in which she and Perdita indulged. Why, it might be in some other life, it seems so far off, so unreal.

Two days after Winterburne brings home a plan of the building, arranged by a practised hand, — a young carpenter, who has taken hold of the idea with an enthusiasm that surprises him. This Mr. Radmer is to negotiate for the property at once, and commence the building as soon as the specifications are properly concluded.

"Why, Mr. Winterburne," he declares, "you will be the redemption of the place. No one has seemed to care for its advancement. All the towns around us have improved, but when a man made some money here, he went off elsewhere and spent it. And there *has* been lots of money made, only it's always been kept in a few hands, and they had no real interest in the town. And it's queer that you, who will be a rich man in a few years, a stranger too, should concern yourself about us. What luck you've had at Hazens! I suppose it's true? No danger of the vein giving out?"

"There'll be a good deal of it before it *does* give out," answers Winterburne. "For more than a hundred yards it shows no sign of diminution in width, and will be surface working, the most inexpensive of all. So I think it ought to do something for its country's good. It brings with it an obligation."

"Ah, but most men wouldn't think so;" and Radmer studies this new specimen before him with unusual interest. There is something quite fascinating in his eager, wholesome vigor, a compelling power that seems to challenge any kindred spirit to its best, a belief in his own capacity *to bring about* certain issues. And since money is the *great factor*, why should he not believe and do, when it has

been the dream of his life, and he has attained to the competence necessary without any effort on his part?

There is a curious undercurrent in the man's soul, urging him on the more rapidly, that in some natures would partake of superstition. He will *not* begin by self-aggrandizement. He means presently to try again for that greater prize, and he wants clean hands as well as an honest soul. If he has desired riches for her, he will not traverse any point he has heretofore considered a duty.

He is so interested in Radmer that he insists upon Armitage making his acquaintance. He can foresee that the young clergyman, with his high ideals, will have hard, up-hill work, and no doubt become deeply discouraged before he makes any headway. He has seen the glory of these sublime truths he means to teach, in such a wondrous light; they have so flooded his soul, that he will not be able at first to understand the obtuseness, the indifference, of a people like these. His fastidious, conservative fibres have been strengthened by his scholastic training, and his own belief has met with but few strains. To him a "thus saith the Lord" is sufficient. But he has gone down deep in the divine love, while to most of these people religion seems a sort of tradition their fathers and mothers have settled for them, and that they have accepted complacently. With others there is a curious hostility, a sort of alertness in their defences, as if they might be unwittingly captured if they were found off guard. Then there are the prosaic indifference, the utter blankness, the habit of letting the present suffice. Heaven seems a long way off and a little uncertain, but the present needs are real and pressing.

Radmer has always been here as boy and man, and understands the prejudices of the people. He can in certain ways be of great assistance to Armitage, and, though the companionship may not be as satisfying as that he finds out to the old Prall house where he has already become a frequent visitor, it will be quite as important.

"What's this I hear?" asks Dale one afternoon, when *Winterburne* has come in from a day spent at the mine.

"You have begun early to waste your substance on the town. Are you quite sure an addition to the poorhouse wouldn't have been better? Some old folks do find their way thither, but what are you going to do with a town hall? give public concerts?"

"Yes. Gather up the musical talent of the place. There are several quite spirited fiddlers, I have observed, and a cornet player, besides a drum corps. Why, we might give quite a concert. Then a strolling lecturer might happen along, a debating society could be formed. There are no end of purposes for which it would be available." And Winterburne smiles with cordial brightness.

"See here," says Dale, squaring his small figure in a rather belligerent fashion, "you're young yet, Winterburne. You've had some uncommon luck, — enough to turn any one's head, and I've remarked yours is pretty level. Don't get affronted at what I'm going to say. Just think that I'm old enough to be your father — if I'd begun life early as some men;" and he gives an abrupt little chuckle. "My advice to you is to look out for yourself. Let some of the big men with their millions come back and endow their native towns, but don't you throw away your money before it's fairly begun to come in. If this town is dying for a hall or anything, let public spirit join and build it, and keep it. There's nothing to be done in a little place like this. And you young fellows nowadays get your heads so full of socialistic projects! When you go off on that train there's no telling where you will bring up. There, I haven't done you a mite of good, but I've had my say! That young parson, I s'pose, has got hold of you, and he'll count for more'n any ten other men."

"No; I think it's the other way — I've impressed him. You see, Dale, I'm a plain sort of fellow myself, and just at present my expenses are very moderate. I could spend all this will cost on a year's living. Perhaps no one would consider it very extravagant;" and he glances steadily at *the other*.

"No, *they* wouldn't. Only it would look a little too

previous,—as if you couldn't wait for the splurge! But I'll tell you, Winterburne, there's no power on earth like money. I've been through the mill, ground up pretty close once or twice. Good Lord! if I had your chance, five or six years from this time I'd be one of the big men in the State. Business is right at the top round now, and the swells begin to go down in two or three years. Of course you'll have your mine—if it doesn't come to an end;" and he gives a short chuckle; "but prices are first class, and everything is going with a rush. Now is your time to save money, and make paying investments. Money makes money enough sight faster than labor. You keep clear of these philanthropical fandangoes; they always lead a man a pretty dance, and he's mighty likely to come home barefooted. See here, I go to church pretty regular, though I don't believe as much as I did years ago; but I read my Bible. It's a book with lots of common-sense in it. And here's a text I commend to you; it's good, sound advice: 'And men will praise thee when thou doest well unto thyself.' When they leave off praising and begin to blame, you're not of much account. You don't carry any weight in the places where real, unadulterated business heft would help you. And when once you get going down-hill there's mighty little to catch hold of. People sheer to one side; but I've noticed that when you're most up to the top there's lots standing ready to give you a boost. You just hustle up to the top, then begin with your halls and your libraries and your homes for old folks, and you'll find yourself swimming right into favor. The very people you want to benefit will pay more attention to you. I've had twenty years more experience than you."

Dale's face settles into the self-consciousness that seems to be born of the experience upon which he lays such stress, and is quite sure it enables him to be a competent judge. That it has been within extremely narrow lines makes no difference in his estimation. Certain methods bring about certain results in England, Japan, or America.

"I've studied up on the question too, but I can't

think that conclusion the best," says Winterburne gently. "Everybody has a fling at Warwick, but has any one tried his hand at mending? The town authorities don't even attend to their work. Property is so poor it can't stand enough taxation to improve anything. Manufacturing towns don't need to be the off-scourings of creation. Look at the history of some of them that have blossomed into promising and successful cities. But you have to create a desire for advancement, to waken an ambition for the possession of material things, something that *can* belong to the individual. Count up the many beautiful places that have come into existence by a dozen or twenty people buying a bit of land, and building homes for themselves. Their satisfaction won others. Then business came in. There's no earthly reason why Warwick should be such a forlorn place after thirty years of existence."

"Well," responds Dale doggedly, "I'm not going to put any money in it. I give you fair warning! I'm too old to try any fool experiments. I've set my eyes on a pretty piece of land at Cedar Grove, and the first money I have to spare I shall spend in making a comfortable home for my old age. Our ancient hut isn't worth repairing, and it doesn't look any better to me because generations of Dales have lived and died in it. 'Twas all right enough then, but business has crowded up too close, and I'm going to get out to something I can enjoy. Now, if you had a mind to put money in that, and come up there, you and your sister, and some of the best people here, we'd soon have a nice settlement."

"And leave Warwick to go to the dogs?" Winterburne nods with an amused sort of inquiry:

"Well, they're a brutish lot anyhow. Iron workers in these places always are. All they want is beer and whiskey and tobacco. What's the use of stirring them up? They won't make any better workers. Just as soon as you fill 'em up with new wants, there's the very devil to pay in strikes and troubles generally. Can't you let well enough alone?"

Dale is losing his temper. They are leading off so

splendidly. Orders are pouring in upon them, their iron is of so fine a quality, and now seems a chance for fortune-making — the thing that has so far eluded Dale in spite of several fair outlooks. To have this young fellow upset things generally in the vain endeavor to raise these people who are content, and don't care to be advanced, is the maddest folly. Then, they are mostly foreigners. He puts this to Winterburne as one of the strongest arguments.

"You forget that their children are going to be our citizens and legislators presently. They must have some training, or in time to come the better classes, as they are called, will be the sufferers. But I do not believe my one hall or reading-room will stir up an insurrection. And then I shall have some money back of me, so the business will not suffer."

"You're a queer compound, Winterburne, and there'd be no sense in us three fellows getting cross-grained," he says after a little thought. For though they took this smart young fellow in at first for the sake of his process and his undoubted business capacity, he is now, or soon will be, the moneyed man of the firm. And if the luck is on his side, he may even engineer his way through with the workmen, with whom he is a favorite already. Dale has settled to his beliefs after what he always terms his years of experience, and he is confident that he is right.

"Yes; we must pull the same stroke," says Winterburne with his pleasant laugh, turning away. He has the larger patience of wider reading and more recent methods of education. He has seen life under more varied aspects than his compeer of half a century.

CHAPTER XIV

IN A NET

Come take your flowers,
Methinks I play as I have seen them play
In Whitsun pastorals.

Winter's Tale.

EVENTS go on much as usual at Bradley House. Regina is in great demand for society pleasures. She fits into this niche so admirably, she adorns it with a subtle grace, she is so harmoniously adjusted to all the minor chords, which are struck more frequently than the great, grand ones. Mount Sardis comes down to Beverly in exquisite array to luncheons and lawn parties. There is a very flattering strife for Miss Halford. True, there are some pretty girls, some attractive young married women, some charming elderly ladies, but she is the rare blossom of the town. She is not haughty, but you know she could be; she has an elegant graciousness that propitiates at once: the result of fine perception rather than affluent culture. And in a certain charming sense she pays back with a fastidious independence, so that there is nothing grasping or selfish about her outward demeanor. It is the air of always having been just where she is, the consciousness that there can be no surprises to mar the harmony.

She has taken much pains to come up to this standard. She has made it so much a part of her being that she never even to herself acts a part, because she so thoroughly enjoys it all.

Jasper is not necessarily her attendant. Regina has *many* attractions for the opposite sex as well, and there is a *strand of jealousy* in Jasper not quite to her fancy. Then, *endeavor as she may*, she cannot lift him out of moments

of the most trying triviality. He suggests so many ardent possibilities that he does not in any degree fulfil. At first she was charmed with the delightful companionship; the subtle beauty that seemed to change with every emotion, the rapid, dazzling variations of temperament, the softness that was seductive, yet brought to quick crispness, and flash like that of steel, the tenderness answering quickly to any appeal. Something through it all seems lacking, a quality for which she can find no name. He has moments of passionate strength when one is impressed with the idea that he can rise to heroism, there are others when he wearies Regina with an unpleasant, self-willed childishness. Music always exalts him, and at such times he appeals to her strongly in spite of herself, as if she longed to fashion his mental attributes into a higher, truer kind of man, for she is haunted with a vague impression that he is playing a part. If her surmise is true, he will play it all his life.

When he is out with her, and having a sort of guardianship over her, he is at his best, comes nearer to the ideal manhood she dreams of for him. But she fears a subtle danger in this. He comes too near, he assumes too much. She has had no great experience with lovers, though admirers are plenty; but with womanly instinct she translates the low, impassioned tones, the limpid, unfathomable glance that at once confesses, and seems to hold back hidden treasures, that pliant yielding of the figure as if he could hover forever about her, until she was encompassed beyond retreat with his influence. A coquette would meet him on his own ground, but she is too honest, her nature is too really fine. So she puts little distances between them: she goes out driving with a carriage full of friends, she accepts invitations for herself alone. There are people who do not quite approve of him, who have a vague fear that some unfortunate reminiscences may still come to light concerning the father. At all events, Regina makes it understood in a delicate way that she has no desire to reign as mistress at *Bradley House*. She annoys Jasper by the very gracious-

ness with which she disposes of him for promenades, dances, and not infrequently in the party drives. The young girls are delighted with this generosity.

As for the others, Cynthia is quite too largely lacking in sentiment to attract him. Perdita is a child, and, curious fact, the smallest favorite with the elder Mr. Bradley. She and Jasper have a good deal of merry badinage, and very decided disagreements, if one can tell by the resolute air with which they go opposite ways. They always agree about music, however. A few notes of the violin will draw her from the most desperate fit of sulkiness or obstinacy. Jasper had not been in the house a fortnight before he was giving her lessons. Mrs. Halford made a faint protest, it was so against her ideas of girlish delicacy to play the violin.

"She will soon tire of it if no one opposes her," Regina declares. "She has just the vein of obstinacy to long for it if she is deprived of the enjoyment, and we shall seem like tyrants."

Regina's experience in the past bore this out. The pleasure that Perdita was refused became straightway the most passionately desired delight. She was largely given to taking up pursuits eagerly, and then tiring of them, giving them up in disgust if they were optional. She often tired of her school-girl friends, yet she was not really fickle, perhaps too easily attracted and too quick to discern unfavorable qualities.

So she began to play. In one of his flying visits to the city Jasper had bought her a violin. Mrs. Halford had insisted upon paying for it, but Jasper had besought in such a fascinating fashion that both she and Regina yielded.

"Why, you were so kind and friendly to us in the beginning!" he cries in a beguiling, frank way that disarms firmness and objections. "Surely one little gift might be allowed!"

There are two or three weeks of horrible attempts. Perdita would throw it up but for the intense delight of

making her own music when she gets out of sight and hearing, in the kindly woods. She has mastered the chords and improvises, follows the songs of different birds, catches the subtle melody of the wind as it murmurs up and down, drawing one kind of cadence from the pine, another from the cedar, the oak, and a symphony quite distinct from the tops of the tall chestnuts. How curious, how entrancing, it all is! It wraps her about in a tranced atmosphere; with fast-floating, fragrant clouds, it carries her to an enchanted realm that thrills and permeates every fibre of her being. Does Jasper feel this way, she wonders? Then she has a secret none of the others can fathom or penetrate. She is nearer to him. Not Regina's beauty even could so infiltrate every pulse. It brings a curious exultation.

These wild indulgences would be forbidden if she confessed them to Jasper. She does endeavor to her very utmost with her lessons, and makes tolerably fair advances. But when school ends she has long, delightful days, while all the others are employed about various matters. She comes to consider it her own enjoyment, not something that she must contribute to household pleasures. The practising does make Mrs. Halford nervous, and Regina's fastidious nerves protest as well.

That Perdita should go roaming around the woods troubles no one. Tramps are rarely seen in this vicinity, and the big hound, Jack, is her safeguard. One afternoon when she is in the midst of an impetuous, daring strain, at which the very birds pause to listen, the faithful guardian gives a low, threatening growl.

"Jack," cries a voice persuasively, "Jack, good fellow!"

She does not stop at the sound, for she is possessed by a marvellous melody in her brain which she cannot half interpret, but is flying along with the few strains her bow can bring into existence. He stands motionless. The brown eyes are fixed, translucent, gleaming with a kind of inspiration. Her soft hair has tumbled about her shoulders, *and here and there catches a ripple of sunshine that pene-*

trates the branches. Her face is all one glow of rapt enthusiasm.

Then the melody sinks lower, lower, and with a despairing little wail dies out.

"O Perdita! Perdita!" he exclaims, drawing a long breath.

She drops at the trunk of the great tree, lays her violin down on the grass, shakes her tumbled hair defiantly, while her face settles into significant lines. Jack comes and thrusts his head in her lap, looks up at her in perplexity as if to ask what has gone wrong.

"Scold and have done with it," Perdita begins crossly. "You made such a fuss the other morning, and said I would never learn to play, because I put in half a dozen notes just as one takes sugar with medicine!"

Jasper laughs, an alien sound as if it had been Pan instead. But his face shows an interested surprise rather than displeasure, which Perdita is quick to detect.

"It is my own music," she says a little sullenly. "And I went over the lesson until I know it all by heart."

"Very well. Then I shall not scold. And you dreamed that here under the trees. Have you dreamed out many things like that?"

"You are ridiculing me," in disdainful anger.

He throws himself down beside her, takes her warm, throbbing hand that is brown as a gypsy contrasted with his.

"Scold you," he repeats. "Perdita, my darling, I am marvelling at you! Why, you have a genius, a positive genius, if you can play like that — with so little instruction. I have heard some wonderful improvising" — then he pauses, with his dreamy glance on the grass at their feet, seeing a vision that may be made possible. The next moment he shrinks and shudders, glances at her in mute entreaty.

"Oh, what is the matter?" she cries in alarm.

That recalls him to himself. He utters a thin, forced laugh that seems an echo of something hidden, painful, and gives his shoulders a shake.

"I was thinking — well, it is of no account now, and it doesn't belong to this life. But you — have you played much in this fashion? — you need not be afraid. I am your cousin, your friend, not your teacher, just now."

"I used to come up when Miss Hilliard was here — after school, just to comfort myself for the toil and moil and hateful lessons! And I've gone on" —

"I've wondered sometimes whither you had vanished."

"You see, mother and Regina don't like it very well. Regina is so — so — how shall I say it?" and a perplexed little knot gathers in her forehead. "Just what other people, *her* kind of people, do is right, all other courses are more or less reprehensible. Girls *are* learning to play the violin, but no one does it as yet here in Beverly. I don't know but it does look a bit stagey. I've never come across anything I've loved until I began to play this," touching her violin affectionately with one small brown finger. "But I do mean to learn rightly."

There is such an entreating sound in this promise. Perdita's anger has vanished. She never keeps it very long when Jasper has been its object. She glances up with a touch of timidity that gives her an especial fascination for him.

"Yes," he makes answer encouragingly. "You have only gone such a very little way, that I hardly understand how you could arrange such melodious chords. But I shall teach you differently. We will have a music-room up here in the woods with Jack for audience."

"I think Jack doesn't like music *very* much," she answers dubiously. "He endures it because he has a high moral sense of duty in guarding me from possible danger."

"Well, then, I will guard you and listen delightedly."

"You can't scold when I go wrong, for you will not see the score in my brain," Perdita says mischievously.

"I could *hear* a discord or a false note or an improper measure. I wonder," with a sudden jealousy "if you do not mean to crowd me out, escape me altogether."

"Crowd you out? Why, you know" —

She does not complete the sentence. He has said jesting little things to her, he has petted her, and claimed her as a dear little cousin. He has declared in some hasty, impassioned moments that she was his darling, and the girl thrills to herself as she recalls them in rather lonely moments. She knows that he adores Regina's beauty and style, yet she can understand that he frets at the half-unconscious authority. She is too young to dream of love even, only in the impersonal way an imaginative being connects it with future happiness, the great thing that is to illumine her life, to possess her soul.

This happens one afternoon when Regina has gone with a party to Mount Sardis. Mrs. Halford has drowsed in the hammock with a mild, rather stupid novel. Cousin Bradley has wandered up and down the path, and then gone to his room, where he reads and writes a good deal. Jasper and Perdita may be off somewhere; at all events, they are safe. Mrs. Halford does not dream of any danger to Perdita. Indeed, she would not disapprove of Jasper choosing one of her girls. They will, no doubt, have lovers and get married — best so, for that seems a woman's true destiny. Occasionally a vague doubt concerning Regina enters her mind, but it is soon dismissed.

Perdita exults in her little secret, that she holds very innocently. That they should go out of sight and hearing seems in no wise strange to her, for violin agony is not pleasant to any ears. Sometimes it is in the morning, when Regina and her mother drive out together. Mrs. Halford has a little nervous feeling about Perdita's irregular methods, and considers herself safer with her eldest daughter.

Jasper changes curiously on this musical question. There have been lessons that proved a great annoyance. He has undertaken the task partly from amusement at the girlish enthusiasm, and the habit of intimacy it established, the link of relationship it cemented. Sometimes his pupil *was bright and tractable*, at others dull and indocile. He *fancied Regina was right in thinking she would give it up*

of her own accord. Yet she had evinced no disposition toward this ending.

Now all his interest in her is roused afresh. The violin is not merely a wilful whim, but the very passion of her soul, and in it she has given him the keynote. The training now is not merely that of a pupil, but of the genius he feels quite certain she can be, if the hundred and one incidents in a woman's life do not prevent. He does not plan even to himself that he shall marry her; but he glances forward a long distance, and decides that no one else shall until he is quite ready for the favored lover. He is not fond of sharing the things he likes with any one, so this has an indescribable charm. What influence it may have upon Perdita's life or future he does not consider. The present is enough.

Cynthia's absence has given the child so much liberty that on her return Perdita feels almost like a prisoner. The first day they all go up the river on a picnicking party. It seems almost as if Cynthia suspected something, she comes between them at every turn. Not even a brief ramble can be taken; but Perdita is brilliant with eager gayety. The next morning Regina has a headache, and Mr. Bradley is rather captious.

"Bring your violin, and let us go up in the cedars," Jasper says quite authoritatively. "We will not try the family nerves by a lesson in-doors, or even on the porch."

Perdita's heart leaps up at this command. When she crosses the bit of lawn, she finds Cynthia in her shade hat, with some netting in her hand.

"I want to hear whether you have improved any," she says quietly; "and it will be lovely up in the woods, everything is so beautiful. The dry weather at Warwick has come near to spoiling the few charms it possesses. I hardly thought there would be such a difference."

Perdita's pulses mutiny in passionate resentment. "I—I do not want you," with sudden heat and almost ungracious frankness; "you can go to the woods any time. *I do better alone. I am not sufficiently advanced for an audience.*"

"Since when have you been so supersensitive?" and Cynthia glances at her with an affectation of carelessness. "You did not mind me before."

She walks along the path, wondering what has given her this feeling of supervision. Was it something Miss Hilliard suggested, something she divined herself, or one of those intangible presentiments?

"If you really consider it worth while, come then," Jasper says, veiling his annoyance by a gay indifference. "We have been going over an exercise for two violins; perhaps that will not be so bad. We will have some respect for your nerves as well; but," pointedly, "a real lesson is best given alone—especially if I want to scold my pupil."

Then he takes Perdita's arm caressingly just for a moment, and stretches out his hand for her case. She walks on in silence, he and Cynthia keeping up a fragmentary conversation that really dies out before they reach their destination, a small, level space, shaded by an encircling group of trees. Jasper finds a seat for Cynthia, a little out of range.

The elder is not especially entertained by the tuning and scraping which is prolonged needlessly, until Perdita's eyes are alight with amusement. Cynthia's thoughts go off presently to the grim, unlovely town, to the three who have opened a new world to her by their pregnant, stirring topics. That the duet is not a success, she hardly notes; her mind seems stirred by vague struggles, the intention of which eludes her, as if she were not at all sure of her own wants. Influences that she cannot understand toss her about like a restless sea. She seems such a poor, useless thing to herself, with no strong characteristics. Perdita may become a musician, Regina rule, a society queen in some small, select kingdom. When she is tired of this lounging, butterfly life, these odds and ends one picks up on the social shore, what then? No wonder Miss Hilliard is so busy and happy: there are demands and purposes to her life.

The soft summer wind mingles its melody with the violins at their sweetest; the birds warble accompaniments. Filmy blue-green shadows dance about as if roused and stirred to intenser motion. The dusky hollows have touches of weird suggestiveness, the air is sweet with pungent, woody odors. They pass her unheeded, but they stir every pulse in Perdita's small body. She and Jasper smile across the bars of music. It is not so bad after all, only it establishes an uncomfortable precedent; she suggests this to Jasper.

"As if we could not find ways to outwit her." Jasper laughs softly. "Come," he says after a moment, "let us run away."

A dancing light floods Perdita's brown eyes; she softly puts up her violin. They take one of the narrow paths and hurry along. It is almost as if they were entering an unknown world; the very trees have a weird look, the shade grows more dense, the cedars give out a damp fragrance. So they go rambling on and on.

Cynthia starts suddenly from her unprofitable day-dream, and is vexed at the defection of the others. She walks slowly back to the house. Martha, the reigning spirit of the kitchen, is singing a doleful tune, as she prepares the vegetables for dinner; her mother and Mr. Bradley are at one of their interminable discussions; so she goes up-stairs. Regina has risen and is sitting by the open window, languidly brushing out her soft, dark hair, that falls over her white dressing-sack like a cloud tossed about by the wind.

"Is your head better?" asks Cynthia.

"Oh, yes; I did get very tired yesterday, and we were so late coming home: but the row in the moonlight was worth it all. Where is Perdita? I have not seen her this morning, nor heard her either."

"She and Jasper have gone off with their violins. I went up the hill with them but presently they disappeared. Are they out much together?"

"I don't know," uncertainly: "no, I think not. I supposed *Perdita's* craze would die out, and that Jasper would

lose patience. Whatever else nature may have designed him for, his forte is not music-teaching; the whim answers for an entertainment through vacation."

"But — do you suppose" — and Cynthia halts lamely.

"Do I suppose what?" with a little sharpness. Regina is not fond of ambiguities.

"Is it best that they should be so much together? Perdita has some queer strands in her nature. And, O Regina! don't you remember her old fancy of being a singer or going on the stage?"

Cynthia glances up rather startled at her own chimera.

"Hosts of school-girls have dreamed that, and ended by going to a theatre two or three times a year," Regina says with a touch of contempt. "If *you* think it possible, don't suggest it to her excitable brain."

"I didn't really mean that; but suppose she should get fond of — Jasper?" Cynthia asks with trepidation.

Regina is startled, then considers as she brushes the abundant lengths of hair.

"It wouldn't be a bad match," she responds with delicate deliberation. "Only — Jasper is extremely fond of beauty, and poor Perdita doesn't make any great showing in that line at present. She is dainty, wilful, and piquant, and would entertain certain kinds of men continually. She pleases Jasper, but whether" —

"Whether Jasper would make a good husband? I have my doubts," says Cynthia, with assurance of youth, largely intuitive.

"Husbands are a good deal what their wives make them," returns this fair philosopher. "Jasper has many pleasing qualities."

"Whether they are fine and noble and honorable is of the greater import."

Regina studies her sister a moment. "That sounds a little pedantic, like Miss Hilliard," she says with an irritating half-smile. "We have not found anything ignoble *in him yet*, so far as I am aware, or dishonorable," with a *curious emphasis* that calls the color to Cynthia's cheek as

she remembers some talks about Winterburne. "And if he really loved Perdita, I can't see any special objection to it; but I should not want the poor child entangled in any such discomfort as a one-sided fancy. Cynthia, you *have* a little common-sense."

"Really?" Cynthia gives an amusingly significant smile.

"Yes, we must consider." An inscrutable gravity settles over her face. Is she quite certain of her own conclusions? It would be monstrous to put Perdita between herself and some fine annoyances. But if Jasper really came to love her! There is the bond of music between them. *She* has a curiously dissatisfied feeling concerning Jasper, as if she might have idealized the possible nobleness in him: his devotion to his father, his graceful tenderness to her mother, so free from effusiveness, the bright, cheerful, dazzling atmosphere he made in the old house. Every way she has contrasted him with Winterburne to the latter's disfavor. But she has to admit that Winterburne has a steady motive to life which he means to pursue unflinchingly; not even love will turn him aside. Jasper has no motive save personal enjoyment. The thing that pleases him is right, the others are matters of indifference: he can argue them into positive wrongs and injuries. At first she fancied him largely dominated by frankness and simplicity; she has a vague suspicion now that the admirable points in his character are a mere simulation of these. Is she so sure of her own penetration and judgment? And if she cannot quite approve, will it be right to thrust Perdita into danger? She is too naturally sincere to blind herself by any specious arguments. The sense of shaping any one's destiny overshadows her with a heavy, uncomfortable responsibility studied in this light.

"I have a feeling that Jasper doesn't care about marrying," says Cynthia slowly, yet she furtively watches Regina.

"There need be no talk about marrying," with an impatient severity. "*Perdita* is too much of a child at present.

We must exercise a little care, that is all. Not enough to annoy either of them."

"Then, you must look after Jasper, for we two should soon come to direct conflicts if left much alone. I have an unconquerable temptation to tease him. And I am afraid Perdita will be too sharp for me."

"What nonsense!"

Then Regina rises, finishes her toilet, and arrays herself in a gown of vague bluish-gray that reminds one of a soft summer mist. About her neck is a simple fall of lace; but she looks queenly, Cynthia decides: a little pale, with a touch of shadows under her eyes that heightens her fairness. No wonder Winterburne thinks her handsome.

Jasper is in his own room, talking to his father, long before Perdita comes in sight. When Cynthia espies her she strolls around the slightly ascending path. She had much better remained on the porch.

"I hope you were every way satisfied with your attempt at duennaship," exclaims Perdita with a rather sharp intonation. "Next time leave your own thoughts at home if you mean to be a perfect success," she advises.

Some inscrutable change *has* come to Perdita already. She does not look older; indeed, extreme youthfulness will always be Perdita's portion, but there is a light of wisdom, of experience, that quenches Cynthia, makes her feel helpless and at loss.

"Why, Perdita! we have been so much together always," in a protesting tone.

"*We* can be together almost any time," with an acrid sort of emphasis, and the brown eyes sparkle. "Yet there may be occasions when a pupil does better alone, as Jasper advised you. My music is my own pleasure. I dare say Regina set you to watching me."

"Regina? No. She never intimated — And if she had, she is so up in all the proprieties" — Cynthia gives a pleasant little laugh. "I came of my own volition. *You need not blame her.*"

Which is all true, though Cynthia apprehends some changes in the future.

"Don't be vexed with me, Perdita," pleadingly.

"Don't be silly then."

Perdita walks with her small chin proudly elevated. It is almost dinner-time, and she goes straight to her room with a careless nod to Regina in passing. She lays down her violin carefully, as if it were the most fragile thing in existence, tosses off her hat, and stands silent as a statue, her face one passionate, scarlet flush. Does Regina mean to take everything? Is she to rule every one in the house? There will be Winterburne left for her if she wants to try her hand! A passion sweeps over her like a swift current, a secret knowledge that Regina's stately coldness cannot stir Jasper's soul as the music moves it, and *she* is in the music. That is her one defence against the other's beauty. His appreciation is so fervent, so delicious, so utterly enchanting, that it seems, dangerous knowledge, as if no one ever rightly esteemed her before. There is no future to this, just an impetuous, wilful present.

There is a succession of callers during the afternoon. Mr. Bradley is at his best, and extremely charming, and they are all bright and pretty enough for a pastoral. For the evening there is a choice of entertainments. Regina does not feel inclined to partake of them, and tries to persuade Jasper to do his duty as a representative young man; but he laughingly declines unless she takes him for an escort. Before the evening is half spent, however, two very young men saunter up the hill, one the brother of Perdita's dearest school friend. Mrs. Halford sits there serene enough for oceans of propriety, so Jasper entices Regina into a little stroll. She is nothing loath, but he would be less elated if he knew the grave perplexities that burdened her. She has decided that Jasper is the one to whom her appeal shall be made. She is not quite certain but that the best step of all will be to send Perdita away to school, and it will not be many weeks before the *friendly doors open*. It may be they will go down in the

town for the winter, perhaps try some of the pleasant cities for a month or two.

"We shall hear of nothing but Warwick," he declares rather pettishly. "Cynthia has been converted to iron mines and furnaces, and the amelioration of those brawny Englishmen and Welshmen."

This *is* the topic they have left behind them.

Regina comes back suddenly to common-places, feels the soft fragrance of the night air in her face, in her very brain, calming it.

"Did you ever fancy — no, that is a ridiculous idea, admissible only on the plan of a heart being caught in the rebound — that Cynthia might make a conquest at that un-beautiful place?"

"A conquest? Cynthia?" surprised and uncertain as to his meaning.

"Why, there is the very prince himself, not a bad speculation, either. And it would serve to straighten up matters a bit. It may be a little on his conscience — of course I mean Winterburne, as you must know;" with an abrupt little sound that is hardly a laugh.

There is a sudden start, a something quite indescribable that goes through Regina's form, not pronounced enough for a shiver, but a surprise. His arm is just back of her, and then a curious secret knowledge warns him he has touched upon something not pleasing to her. It is a delight to him to move her in any manner.

"Why not?" he resumes. "He must know that he is quite outside of *your* world, that it would be reaching up to a star, and he must forever come short. But Cynthia would be a nice, comfortable body in such a sphere. Do you not think she could be supremely happy taking broths and jellies and garments to the poor wretches who haven't wit enough to make them themselves? And she could advise them to sweep up their houses and wash their children's faces — not that they ever follow the advice" —

Regina turns in offended dignity. "Jasper," in her coldest tone of voice, "do you realize what you are saying?"

He does laugh then, a soft, irritating peal, that assumes an accord with his hearer when one touches the under-current.

"Is it so unusual to speculate upon such possibilities?" She feels that he is looking at her across the vague starlight. "I think I have heard them touched upon even in select circles," he goes on daintily. "Would you feel offended if you knew I had used my best endeavors to extinguish one surmise that had you for its heroine?"

She makes a gesture of infinite disdain. And yet, has she not ventured to map out a destiny for him? This serves to restrain her feeling of anger at his covert insolence. She is uncertain whether it is really meant for that, or is simply boyish imprudence; but it always annoys her.

He has mistrusted Winterburne, though there has been nothing but reserve on Regina's part. Still, there was the old time! And though he seems gracefully indifferent in most encounters, he never loses an opportunity of dealing an opponent a blow.

"It was simply ridiculous to imagine that you could be attracted by such a person, or that his one lucky stroke could have any influence with you. Mere arrogant prosperity with a corner-stone of astuteness, to call it by no worse name, does not appeal to high-bred womanhood," he cries eagerly, as if he thoroughly understood the moving forces of her nature. "And you — why, it would be out of all harmony, ridiculous!"

She does not need him for a champion in this matter, yet how can she resent it without betraying more warmth than she cares to show?

"That, I suppose, is simply a matter between two people," she makes answer scornfully. "And until Mr. Winterburne expresses some preference" —

"A glance from you would lead him to do it. Oh, I am not so blind, my fair cousin. And I was amused at his sister's watchfulness. You would have no friendly assistance from that quarter, I assure you. I think Cynthia would please her much better. She is not so self-centred, *more open to impressions, more easily persuaded*" —

"Do not utter another word on the subject," Regina cries imperiously. "I will not be criticised or commented upon. No one has any right. And you will make me hate you!"

Jasper Bradley is startled. Is there some unguarded fancy that a word has brought to light? Can she be captured by this man's accidental prosperity — the whole of it is accidental and contingent on his share of the Bradley estate. If that had not happened to him he might still be plodding along on the slower road to wealth. From the very first he has looked upon him with a grudging jealousy, and now he hates him. If there were only some decent way of setting him adrift at the very antipodes! Jasper Bradley would never commit a murder; he shudders now at his very thought, but wishes it nevertheless.

There is a sudden swift movement on Regina's part, and she has disappeared. Has he made her really angry? At all events he has spoiled any *tendresse* on her part for Winterburne, and it seems to him she has been listening with quite too much interest to Cynthia's enthusiastic and partial gossip. It rouses him to white heat to think of any other man venturing to hold her hand, to draw near to her in lover-like usage, perhaps some time to kiss the small, proud, scarlet mouth. Yet would not a lifetime with such a self-contained woman prove tiresome?

There are brief, infrequent moments when Jasper Bradley goes back to some vague dream of the past, and seems to see a man striving to the uttermost to overleap the boundaries set for him, who rages and gnashes at an invisible chain fate has thrown about him, and is quite convinced he longs for a higher, clearer, purer life. He has come to certain fields of ease and indolent pleasure, he has cast out the repugnant duties — yes, they were that, but duties nevertheless. He is free from that detestable necessity, but does he really want to struggle for anything beyond? He would rather draw Regina down a little, — yes, if he could, — and if he had thousands and thousands, — why, *this fortune* that seemed so wonderful to him is abject poverty when he faces his desires.

CHAPTER XV

VEXATION OF SPIRIT

Whate'er he did was done with so much ease.

DRYDEN.

JASPER BRADLEY has a rare gift of appearing not to hold malice. Still, he remembers with a certain patient wariness. The next morning he greets Regina with the suave sweetness that we consider an ingredient in a generous nature. She has found herself disarmed with this more than once, compelled to be friendly or disagreeable, and she much prefers being on friendly terms with her associates. She betrayed her weakness last evening in resenting so easily. Neither of these men can be anything to her, she says with an intense pride.

She has a duty toward Perdita. This morning it is quite clear to her that any foolish love-making would be injudicious. The child is in a very wayward mood. She despatches her down town with Cynthia on some trifling errands. Jasper saunters out as well. Regina debates within herself the most feasible course, the one least open to suspicion. She is aware that she must not evince any feeling that can be construed into jealousy of either of these girls. Surely she is not jealous of Cynthia! Why, the child might go back to Warwick to-morrow.

Mrs. Halford does not seem very well, in fact, is quite indisposed, and shortly after noon withdraws to her room and to her bed. Perdita has been asked to a lawn tea, a school girls' party, and after some discussion Cynthia accepts her part of the invitation. There is a long, quiet *afternoon*, but at dusk Mrs. Halford's state denotes con-

siderable fever. Regina watches over her in the evening, bathes her aching head, and gives her cooling drinks, but the fever rises, and the next morning a physician is called in. It is nothing really serious, but there is a week of anxious attendance on Regina's part, who insists in giving up her promised pleasures; but it is not necessary for the two girls to remain in the house, mewed up like nuns, for the summer delights will soon be over. And it is best for Perdita to have a variety.

Cynthia makes no more attempts at playing duenna. The music goes on as usual. Regina has meant to discuss her new project with her mother, but in the present state of affairs it will not do. She sends for some circulars of schools that have interested her, but does not mention her plans.

During the second week Mrs. Halford improves somewhat, walks about her room, and hopes soon to come downstairs.

"She must go away for a little change," declares Dr. Parker. "Take her up to Mount Sardis. She wants some variety, pleasant cheer, new faces, and all that. And the air is so fine for weak lungs; hers are not very strong, I find. And you young people can have a gay time dancing and frolicking about."

"But will there not be too much excitement?" asks Regina anxiously.

The doctor laughs. "If you had been very dissipated and tumultuous I should prescribe quiet, but she has had quite enough of this little round. Of course she won't do the junketing," he says with a smile of amusement, "but she can look on and listen, and go away to her room when she has had enough of it. Bradley House is a fine old place, but one's eyes and brain get wearied with the sameness, and — isn't it the least bit dismal?"

"I don't think we have been dismal, but I have no doubt the change will be beneficial. And we can come home at an hour's notice if anything goes wrong," says Regina.

"Nothing will go wrong. You pretty girls can have a

fortnight of pure dissipation. Then you might go off on a little journey."

At first the girls are gay with anticipation. Then it is seen that Jasper hates to have them go. Mr. Bradley declares all the doctors in the world wouldn't persuade him out of the house, so Jasper perforce must remain with him. It gives Regina a sense of satisfaction. So far, she has not really discovered whether Perdita's fancy is anything more than mere girl-liking for a handsome, cousinly young man. She trusts to time and her own penetration. Yet why should she oppose anything like real love between them? And latterly Jasper has been so brotherly kind in an unassuming manner.

Cynthia and Miss Hilliard have exchanged a few notes; the former has gone down to Warwick for one day, and Miss Hilliard has come up for a visit of twice that length, to pay her respects to the invalid. She is intensely interested in her brother's plans, not his alone, she declares, since Mr. Armitage has settled upon the advancement of the poor for his life-work. The frame of the new building has been raised and sheathed, and already has created no little interest among the people. It is certain to be a success. Her eyes kindle, and a soft light plays about her face that makes her extremely attractive. She seems so happy and content. Regina studies her in an unconscious fashion. Is there something finer in the purposes of life than anything she has yet laid hold of as her best good?

On the second afternoon Norman Winterburne comes up for his sister. They have waited supper for him, and the greeting is so friendly that it sets him at once in his best light. Regina has been wearied with her fortnight's anxiety and confinement to the house, and is a trifle pale. Her eyes have a languor that softens them indescribably. She does not so intrench herself in the cold pride that has kept Winterburne at a distance and made such a profound mystery of the past. This graciousness is a new phase that sets his pulses all athrill. He is manly enough to *admit that she occupies a higher round in the social scale*

than when he first knew her, and that she fills it with a fine grace.

She has a misgiving that she has not been altogether correct in her appraisal of him, not honestly allowed him the virtues he possesses. He might not be able wholly to please her, he might not be her ideal lover — has she any? yet the truthfulness, the impartiality, with which she means to look at every one, compels her to admit that he has some superior, nay, chivalrous, characteristics. He is winning a place in that larger world outside, and his plans have an unselfish aspect that stirs her, brings her back to the time when she admired the real workers who had left a mark. She is half afraid she has not thought matters out so profoundly after all, but just been circling about the eddies where some one else has tossed in a stone. She is even surprised at Cynthia's practical knowledge, and her ready apprehension of the positive needs of humanity. How has Cynthia passed on to this, while she has been filling her soul with trivial subjects — they look so to her to-night.

Even when Jasper Bradley joins the group, as they have come out on the porch for the sweetness of the summer night, Winterburne does not drop into the secondary position he has accepted hitherto. Jasper comes around and questions him about the working of the new mine.

"Well, it was a lucky stroke, and you will be a rich man, looking down upon your poor relations presently," he says with a little flavor of irony.

"He certainly can't look *up* to many of them," declares Cynthia, "being the tallest. And if it is riches you mean, I am afraid a good deal of his will take wings, while we shall be duly considering safe investments for ours."

Jasper tugs at his golden-brown mustache a moment. It will be an unwise step to appear envious or unamiable. As for Cynthia's partisanship — it is a girl's crude admiration. But to see Regina sit and listen, to hear the new gentleness in her tone, piques him almost beyond endurance. He hates to be dethroned even temporarily. She

has condoned his incautious onslaught, and restored him to grace, but he cannot endure that another shall sun himself in that fair light. Is he jealous? Does he really love her? He seems to swing between the two — brown-eyed Perdita to whom he sends a soft glance she can so easily translate, and this stately girl who answers nothing back, who in secret thought, perhaps, holds conference with the man he hates. There should have been only one masculine of the Bradley blood.

They talk of things he dimly understands. Poverty he knows; but this proud, uncompromising poverty, absolutely fighting for a place to work, this wealth, desirous of its neighbors' comfort rather than its own luxury, is a farce to him. He cannot believe in it.

Neither can she in her delicate beauty. He cannot imagine her visiting untidy holes, faugh! he has seen them! and having to pick her way through hordes of dirty children. Let Cynthia do it, if she so wills, but Regina! Has this man no appreciation of her delicacy? Would he drag her through all that hateful slough? Would *she* go?

They walk down to the station with their guests, and on the return the younger girls fall in with a party of their compeers, who are planning a day in the woods over on the other side of the river. Regina and Jasper walk on; she is in too much of a turmoil to consider her companion. For now she begins to question what she has been doing in thus lowering her defences, absolutely showing favor.

The pressure on her arm annoys her. She struggles to disengage herself.

"Regina," in a soft, tremulous voice, "I can keep silence no longer, I love you! love you!"

She stops, and turns to face him in terrified surprise.

"Do you know what you can do with my life? You can bless it beyond compare;" and his tone is impassioned. "You can guide its aspirations that hitherto have had no strong central aim; turn them into nobler channels. Come," he continues with a vehement fire, "you are proud of long lines and family honors. Let us join forces,

and carry them on grandly. We are the only true Bradleys. We have the finer characteristics. What is that rabble to us?"

Regina frees her arm. She is white with indignation.

"I have given you no encouragement to say such words to me," she cries with an incomprehensible tumult of soul that positively shrinks from him. "We have been friends; we are relatives, but — love! You do not know what it is, you have no right to use it — and to me!"

Every pulse within her rebels at the thought.

"Oh, have you studied the subject so deeply?" he cries with a touch of derision. "You must know, then, that I have loved you from the very first. The similarity of tastes, the likes and dislikes — our pleasures would always be the same, that is if you follow your higher instincts, your womanly refinement" — is there a subtle irony in this?

What cant it seems as it falls from his lips! Yet how many times they have talked it over, builded a pretty world for themselves, where nothing inharmonious was to be allowed. Is it possible that she has put herself on his level? that he can compare their souls, and believe them alike? Perhaps nothing so winnows our beliefs and prejudices, real or fancied, as to see another assume them, a dissimilar nature compare ours with it.

"My darling," he cries, "you should be worshipped! Nothing coarse or distasteful should be allowed near you. Let the others go their way, and dress up their disagreeable ideas into duty. There must always be some theorists to keep the world in a ferment; but what is that to us? Let us go out of their sphere and live our own beautiful life, the life you can fill to completeness. And if you want to work for any human soul, work for me. Where I lack, bring me up to your standard. You can do anything you wish with me, Regina Halford. I will be as clay in your hands. Love me; let me love you as I can and will" —

She stops short in the path and confronts him with a figure that grows rigid with resentment. His words have

been uttered so rapidly, and her amazement, her incredulity, fills her, almost to the exclusion of speech. Then she cries with a sharp disdain that borders on anger, —

“Stop, Jasper. Do not utter another word of this. You have no right. I have given you *no encouragement*,” she reiterates passionately.

“No encouragement!” he interrupts with infinite bitterness. “What has the favor of the past two months shown? What did you mean it for? We have read together; we have sung the same songs; we have rambled about in the soft twilight. I have been your attendant. If you had disliked me — but you have shown in a thousand ways” —

She holds up her hand. That and her face is white as marble. Certainly, she *is* guiltless!

“I liked you,” she cries with a curious dispassion. “I will not deny that. You came in the guise of a cousin, and we had been awaiting some one, were prepared to welcome him with the kind of family regard one is supposed to feel for relatives. We would have gone, would have given up the house to you, if you had desired, but you begged us to remain until matters were finally settled. Could we be less than friendly, living in the old house of our ancestors? And if you have taken that for encouragement in a point like this” —

“I have taken other things as well,” he interrupts with a dainty flavor of irony. “There has been a preference, deny it if you will now, when your heart is turning to another, a subtle, flattering preference at times! or were you shielding yourself from some other influence?” — he will not spare her now. “Did you use me merely for a foil? You led me to think the very first time Winterburne came, that you, at least, did not share in the family approval; that the man was not up to your mark, and Heaven knows he was not,” laughing scornfully.

“We will not discuss Mr. Winterburne,” she returns decisively. “The only fact that we have to settle between us is whether I love you well enough” — he has not really asked her to marry him, she remembers, and now that she is

on guard at every point, she will not give him any advantage. The vague suspicions she has battled with before, amount to certainty. "Whether I love you beyond the line of relationship, friendliness," she continues in her fine, deliberate way. "No, I do not. Neither do I think we should make each other thoroughly happy. You are young—really younger than your years, it seems to me—and you will find others to admire"—her heart gives a leap as she thinks of Perdita, who will only have a girl's unreasoning fancy to recover from, instead of a heart-break. For when she finds she is not really loved, that it has been largely illusion, the little sting of mortification will bring about a sensible adjustment.

He has been balancing himself for weeks. Something he calls fate has pursued him hitherto, and he has said this was his one chance for redemption. That when the novelty of the situation faded as the outer leaves of the rose, there would remain sufficient stamina to perfect a vital purpose; a seed, from which should spring the true strength of manhood, he firmly believes, just as he is convinced now, when it is possible for another man to love Regina, that he loves her with the entire force of his soul. It is between her and a kind of vengeance he shall not hesitate to wreak upon any one who falls into his power.

"We have talked of the potent impulses that save humanity," he says in a tone that seems to waver and balance on an unseen pivot. "Love is one. It is given to man once, perhaps, to meet a woman who shall influence and awaken him to the best in his nature, that will inevitably lie dormant under all other touches. And you refuse this?"

The solemnity of his tone startles her, but there is a suggestion of melodrama, an unreality that makes it appear less important to her. And her womanly instinct of self-possession forbids her to sacrifice her soul for naught. He has, no doubt, fancied he loved her; he may believe it even now; but his words and manner cannot convince her *that he is in any tremendous strait.*

"Yes," she makes answer with incisive clearness. "For your sake, as well as my own. We should only grow farther apart when we came to realize the absolute unlikeness of our true aims. We have been like children playing on the seashore with sparkling bits of shell, and imagining them gems. But once out of the water they lose their brilliancy. We should find we had only been playing at love."

"*You* have played at it!" with fiery anger. "Did you play with Winterburne in that past time? for he is under your sway, even yet. Well, go back to him. A man with his accommodating ideas of honorable dealing may perhaps suit you."

He strikes out like a passionate child.

There are voices coming nearer.

"You forget yourself strangely." Then she turns to meet the others, and addresses some unimportant remark to Cynthia.

Jasper Bradley walks on in sullen silence. He has not had his full swing at Winterburne. He can stab her through him. Even now he cannot quite read the meaning of that subtle change in her, indicated only by some delicate touches. As he glances at her tall, flexible form, her infinite grace, and feels rather than sees her beautiful, proud face turned even from the light of the stars to the cool, shadowy dusk of the summer night, he can hardly decide whether he hates her or loves her most. He would like to have her in his power. *Is there no way?*

Dropping back a little he falls in line with Perdita. The child loves him in an eager, innocent fashion, and it is balm to his wounded vanity. She has not suggested any binding promises, he has not proffered them. They live simply in a present world where there is no to-morrow.

"You and Regina have been quarrelling," she asserts in a soft whisper. "Was it about — about me?"

He could laugh at the self-assertion.

"Not altogether," he answers briefly.

"*Will you go to-morrow?* Oh, do, Jasper!" — his name uttered in a breathless entreaty.

"Yes," he makes answer, carrying the soft hand to his lips as a great tree droops its branches over them.

She is very happy. Regina will not go. Cynthia will be closely occupied. A delightful day to herself.

Regina is carven marble. This bright, pulsing, flushing, flesh-and-blood creature warms a man's very soul. Except for the anger, he has swung to the other side. He is madly jealous that another shall extract a hidden sweetness from the soul that has been refused him. And that the man should be this dolt of a theorist, wasting his money on a lot of boors! He has so much that he can throw it away outside of his own pleasures.

Regina does not see him at all the next morning. There is a little flurry about luncheon, and the girls go gayly down the path. Perdita has been sunny as the morn which is glowing in brightness.

Mr. Bradley is evidently unaware of his son's causes for discomfort. He comes down on the porch and chats amiably. Regina goes away for an hour or two in the pony carriage.

Her chief errand is to see Mr. Sayre. When she is closeted in the cool, clean room that the great tree by the window fills with curious moving shadows until one could almost fancy it a lake with the rise and fall of tiny waves, her composure returns. He smiles at her inquiringly.

Her business surprises the lawyer a little. It is that in the course of the next fortnight he shall find for them a pretty cottage. They prefer being down in the town for the winter.

"I hope everything has proved agreeable," he suggests rather than asks.

Regina smiles in an affirmative manner.

"We found it inconvenient last winter. And mother's health seems rather precarious. Dr. Parker was strongly in favor of a change. It is rather dreary in the long storms, and cuts one off from many pleasures."

"True, true," and he nods with a certain degree of approval. It has been supposed that one of these girls

will be mistress of Bradley House, but he is quite positive it will not be Regina. On the whole he is better satisfied.

"I must stir up Mr. Jasper Bradley," he says, drawing his brows nearer together. "He or his father, whoever makes the decision, must come to a settlement. If you go away the income of your part will be of service to you. Mr. Winterburne has insisted that no one should be hurried; he is the most generous fellow imaginable. And what luck he has had! Though I must say he deserves it for his shrewdness. Very few men would have bought Finter's rocky old strip at a venture, or indeed, any of it without making sure of its contents."

"You do not imagine"—Regina colors delicately. Why Jasper Bradley's strictures should have rankled so in her mind she has never satisfactorily explained to herself, rather avoided the conclusion, indeed.

"Well, I suppose it looks a little odd, his offering the extra thousand. But I know he never opened the mine until he had been the owner some days. Other men have gone over it hundreds of times. He judged from the general trend, I think, that it might run over on Finter's ground, but he took his risk. It might have been poor iron, it might have been a mere pocket, but it is the finest magnetic ore in this part of the county. Very little in the State assays better. They have gone down thirty feet and found no change in the quality. The mine alone would be a fortune. Then they have some process that is a great advantage—that belongs to Winterburne as well. And the man is inside of thirty yet! Here we old fellows have plodded along without ever striking a bonanza!" and he gives a series of little nods that denote rather regretful resignation.

"Did I ever tell you," as she makes no reply, "that when he first came here he had an idea that if he didn't take up his part it might go to your mother? Queer stories get about concerning fortunes, and so few people understand what is possible and what isn't. Why, I thought *at first he couldn't be altogether level!*" Mr. Sayre laughs

softly, and raises his brows a trifle. "But he's nobody's fool. I hear he has some crotchets about Warwick, and the laborer's rights, and all that. Most men mend of that as they get older, and have taken a large amount of returns in ingratitude."

Regina has flushed in a most troublesome fashion at the outset, but is her calm, gracious self again, and brings him back to the subject of the cottage. There are several that have been rented merely for the summer. He will make it his business to inquire, and again ventures a delicate surmise about Mr. Bradley's state of mind.

"He is better every way," Regina declares.

Mr. Sayre is satisfied there has been no disagreement between the branches of the family, and admits to himself that Miss Halford's reasons are sufficient.

She walks along the side of the beautiful old park in the grateful shade, as she has a call or two to make. When she thinks of Winterburne's generous impulse, and she cannot dismiss it from her mind, cannot even crowd it out by thrusting in half a dozen other subjects, her soul is strangely disquieted. All the morning she has gone about with a sense of humiliation, of insecurity. This fabric she has reared so patiently, and with such a nice adjustment of material as well as mental proportions, seems trembling to its very foundation. She cannot endure to have Jasper Bradley consider his beliefs and impulses the counterpart of hers. A swift dart of mortification strikes her. She totters on her lofty elevation, and shrinks from the valley below, from which she has so proudly climbed.

She is not in the least complimented by Jasper's avowal. In fact, she feels keyed in a lower octave by the idea of his looking at her in the light of a possible wife. Yet she has liked him, she has even endeavored to correct some qualities that were ill-balanced in her estimation, to shape him to finer, grander aims. But he really has no aims at all. For the first time she sees him nearer to his true light, and *she feels there has been a secret obstinacy clouding her judgment from that first evening when she so readily con-*

sented to his taking the highest seat. Is there any quality in his love besides jealous anger? How ready she has been to look at Winterburne through his eyes! He has known it, doubtless, he has secretly delighted in swaying her. It is monstrous that she should have allowed herself to be blinded by a specious course of false reasoning.

Regina goes homeward presently, and all the afternoon entertains her mother in a sweet, affectionate manner, reading aloud a rather weak, pretty story that is a trial to her, as she sits in her mental sackcloth and ashes, longing for a bitter, bracing draught that shall tend to restore her self-respect.

Supper is still on the table when the party returns. She hears Jasper's voice on the stoop with his soft, mellifluous laugh pointing some sentence.

"I am tired to the last gasp," cries Cynthia. "Do pour me a cup of tea, some one, to revive my sinking pulses. We have had the gayest time imaginable! I have danced until I haven't a foot to stand on—the improvised floor was so humpy and hillocky, and now and then a stone rolled under your foot, and gave your ankle a wrench. Once I thought I was shattered beyond repair, and would have to be left upon a rock, Andromeda wise. The Catlin Point people came down, and they had some enchanting music. Altogether it has been a grand success! I like pleasures to be pleasures pure and simple. I hate to stand round staring at people, who feel just as bored in their inmost souls as I do, for all their inane smiles. And Jasper was simply enchanting!"

Regina has poured the tea, and Cynthia sips it with a cup carefully poised between one thumb and finger and a fan in the other hand. Her brilliance has been unnecessarily heightened by wind and sun, and her eyes have the intense dusk of midnight. There is a sense of warm, glowing life about her. But Regina's eyes furtively wander to Perdita. She is quiet, but she looks mysteriously satisfied, and at Cynthia's last sentence a warm, soft light *hovers about her face*, and her lips part in smiles.

An hour later, as the girls are lingering on the porch in the stillness of the starlight, Cynthia breaks out suddenly, —

“Do you suppose Jasper is clear knocked up, Perdita? There isn’t a sound and only a light in Mr. Bradley’s room. I thought he would be out here to talk it all over. That’s half the fun, criticising the people and laughing at the mishaps. And he was so uncommonly amiable to everybody.”

“He seems to have made a deep impression upon you,” comments Regina dryly.

“Well, I don’t over-praise him usually. He thinks I give him very scant measure. I’m making amends for conscience’ sake.”

Has all this affability been something put on for the day, Regina wonders? It would be simply ridiculous for her to think it a shield for any deep wound. There have been times when she has used her utmost skill and tact to ward off what she fancied sentimental approaches, but she cannot believe even now that Jasper has been seriously in love with her, or has any lasting wound. Yet it would have been so like Jasper to make everybody feel that he had been annoyed.

He is at first quite lofty with her the next morning, but through the course of the day they come back to the old friendly terms. She has remarked before how difficult it was to establish any real distance between them. There comes a sense of rest at the thought that soon she will be able to shut him partly out of her life. She feels tired already with the conflicting emotions that are so barren of results.

The arrangements are made for their trip to Mount Sardis. The hotels have not looked so attractive to her as the cottage annexes, and she has selected three rooms in one of these, where they can be very comfortable and have their meals sent in if they desire. They will take the pony and phaeton. Martha is very glad to have a holiday long enough to visit her sister who lives across the river in a neighboring State.

"You will not quite shut me out," Jasper says to her on one occasion, surprising her as she is walking leisurely down the hill into town. "I shall drive up every day, remembering that there can never be a superabundance of men at a summer resort."

"I have no desire to shut you out," she says coldly. "We are going for mother's sake."

"You are still angry with me," he retorts, as if it were an argument not yet finished.

Regina halts a moment and looks clearly at him, her deep blue eyes almost black with excess of annoyance.

"You will make me angry," she says quietly. "It is best to forget all that has been unpleasant. There is" — she corrects herself — "there can be the old tie and the old friendliness. You will find you have been mistaken" —

"Yes," laughing insolently. "I have been mistaken in some matters. I have been searching for the clew to your unexpected conduct, and have found it. I might have known that a woman of your characteristics, your ambition" — he chooses the word with evident deliberation — "would take money into consideration. Vulcan can always buy Venus in our modern times. I am, after all, a comparatively poor man with no immediate prospect of riches. I have neither mines nor processes nor any of the paraphernalia of business. I hate business!" viciously. "So I cannot compete with my worthy cousin. Perhaps I ought not blame you for preferring him of late, since his fortune has been assured. But I know at first you detested him. Circumstances rule us all. Here is a bit of advice: have a care that the piquant, keen-eyed Cynthia does not distance you in the race."

There has been no way to evade or elude him, even if she had considered such a step. They have walked side by side, for the path is narrow and the road dusty, while the undergrowth of bushes and tangled vines hem her in on the other hand. Then the accusation is too overmastering in spite of its falsity. That she has softened a little to *Winterburne*, after taking extreme care to establish a fixed

status between them, she realizes. It has not been love, it has not been special interest in his success, though she *is* secretly glad of it. Still, if he had been unfortunate, he would have had her sympathy, perhaps a finer regard than at present. But she can see, with a mysterious, agonizing shame, that much of this may look true to an unfriendly third person. The vague dissatisfactions with Jasper Bradley suddenly take shape. Her judgment, her penetration, that she has been training to fine issues, are all at fault. The conscious surprise at herself is as great as the certainty that his trivial imperfections may be strongly rooted faults.

"Are you through?" she cries with infinite contempt, glancing up in such extreme indignation that he is spell-bound, not with any sense of remorse, but at her impressive beauty, that would make the fortune of an actress. She is the correct and striking impersonation of her emotion. He has touched her to the quick, and she *is* vulnerable. She *must* care for Winterburne. His apparent knowledge has hitherto been based upon speculation, and his flings have been mere jealousy. At one time he has loved her as much as his capricious nature admits, at others he has defied, rebelled, feared, and now he seems to do all in a breath. He would like to be her master, her conqueror, but he knows too well that the only positive force left to him is to be her enemy.

"I *could* go on," with suave insolence, "but one weakens one's cause by repetition. I know now why you refused me."

"I refused you because I did not love you. I shall marry no man unless I love him as my very life. I doubt if I marry at all. Go your way, Jasper Bradley"—and she motions haughtily as she stops short in the path.

"Our ways are the same for a short distance," he says with unperturbed grace. "They part naturally at the foot of the hill. You will hate me, no doubt, as a woman always does the man who surprises her secret."

"You have surprised no secret. I am not in love with

Norman Winterburne." She shuts her lips in a straight line, and her eyes have the deep flame of steel.

"You will marry him all the same. Ambition is the end and aim of your life, its ruling motive."

She makes no reply. Perhaps he has been studying her as well, and gone as wide of the mark as she in fancied discrimination. She is amazed at his daring; she feels a little at loss in her conclusions, like one suddenly set adrift in a wide sea.

"Good-morning," in a dainty, mellifluous voice. How much of him is real, how much assumed? She despises herself for having been caught by the meretricious graces. Has she been really honest with herself?

So far as Winterburne is concerned, she is *not* in love. A strenuous effort has kept her out of his reach, but she will not consider why it was necessary to make the effort. Jasper has suggested Cynthia. If she has occasion, she can turn this point against him. His frivolous fancy will soon come to an end.

CHAPTER XVI

PERDITA

Love that is ignorant, and hatred, have almost the same ends. — BEN JONSON.

THE change and the different life quite restore Regina Halford to her usual composure. She would like to consider the episode between herself and Jasper Bradley one of those vague, startling, morning dreams that sometimes haunt one's last nap; it may be in retributive fashion for lingering so long on the downy banks of slumber. But between them there is a secret, uncompromising alienation. Outwardly, she resolves that for the few days left she will make no difference. Mr. Bradley is extremely friendly and seems to regret their going, as well as to count on their return. Regina fancies he is dropping down again; he has a nervous, apprehensive air about him, and his delicate face seems shrunken. What will he do when they go altogether? Her heart is moved to pity. And suppose she cannot induce Mrs. Halford to consent?

The adieus have been kindly. Jasper has promised the girls that they shall see a good deal of him. But he cannot remain under the same roof much of the time, and she means to detach Perdita as much as possible. She mentions this to Cynthia.

"I *do* believe he cares for her," says Cynthia. "And I know the foolish little thing is fond of him, so why should one interfere? If it is a fancy it will die out naturally, and if a love you will only fan it into a fiercer flame. There, doesn't that sound philosophical?" and she points it with her gay laugh. "Only I don't believe it is original."

"She is so young! What leads you to imagine that he *really* cares?" She could disabuse Cynthia.

"I can't tell you. Trifles light as air. I don't pretend *that* is first hand. Don't you sometimes feel as if all the bright and pretty things had been said years ago, Regina, and there was nothing at all left on which to be original, even if one tried? Perdita—let us see—I think it was the day of the last picnic—he was rather pronounced, I fancied. He had the air of not caring if he did commit himself."

A white terror flies up in Regina's face, runs over her whole body in a shiver. That certainly was more mortified self-love than any regard for another.

"It is not a wise thing. If we have no influence we must call in mother's authority."

"I am afraid you will not rouse mother to any active opposition. She likes Jasper, and with the rest of woman-kind, loves a lover. Do you realize, Regina, that none of us have had an actual lover yet? Mr. Winterburne used to drop in when he was a poor young man, and I half suspect you were the attraction"—She is looking out of the windows at the promenaders and does not see the scarlet flaming in Regina's face. "Then I *have* mistrusted Jasper of the weakness of aiming at a star! Why, it is really time one of us had a lover."

Cynthia is in a volatile mood, and will not take matters with due gravity. And Regina feels herself "girt as by fire." She cannot stir alone in this undertaking and expose herself to unjust suspicions. Jasper would be too ready to arm Perdita against her.

The only resource, then, is to throw the young girl into a round of gayety. Of this there is no lack. There are the early drives, the games for the younger people on the great shady lawns that are a succession of small, elegantly kept parks, while the bands discourse music and the elders sit around; there are dainty luncheon parties, the siesta in one's room, or the numerous hammocks suspended under waving trees or on cottage piazzas; the afternoon drive, the promenade, *the* lounging on the wide hotel balconies, *that are like rooms in their spaciousness; the pretty young*

girls floating about in the enchanting beauty of summer toilets, the elders in the glory and pride of grander costumes and statelier demeanor. It is like a charming and select town, just large enough for one to feel perfectly at home.

Regina enjoys it very much. She drives her mother out in the morning, and in a few days the tall, beautiful girl becomes quite an object of admiration. The younger girls go afterward; it is quite admissible, though some of the new people are bringing in more fastidious regulations. They take their dinner at the hotel, they go to luncheon parties, and nearly every evening there is some dancing-party or a hop. The older-fashioned people who have been in the habit of coming for years, who carry their Quaker descent in their plain attire, their sweet, grave faces, protest a little at the unwonted gayety.

Jasper keeps his word. He rides up in time for the afternoon outing on his glossy black thoroughbred, and often remains to dinner, especially if the girls are going to dance in the evening. Mrs. Halford is much interested in the enjoyment of young people, and does not object to remaining for an hour or two. They make some friends almost immediately who are not averse to chaperoning a party of attractive girls, especially when they have a handsome attendant. Jasper does become a great favorite. Regina speculates upon the curious fascination he possesses. To a certain extent she excuses herself for having been deceived by the assumption of graceful virtues he deftly counterfeits. Really she sometimes thinks the high and rather austere virtues *are* at quite a discount.

Not that she is tempted to rail at society or despise it in her secret soul. There are certain phases that do not attract her; she remembers her disgust when she saw them under other conjunctions. There is not the rush nor the rivalry of the larger summer worlds, but there is quite enough of envying and jostling and heart-burning and trying to be greatest.

Cynthia persuades Miss Hilliard, or, rather, entreats her

so warmly to join them when she picks a bit out of a letter that suggests a desire for change, that Mr. Winterburne surprises them one morning by coming up to make inquiries. Perhaps he is nothing loath to have an excuse to see them all frequently under cover of brotherly solicitude. But it is Cynthia who pilots him about and discusses the merits and demerits of every location. Their own cottage is full of "permanents." But they find two rooms in one near by, and he returns to take luncheon with them. Regina is very curiously cold and constrained. Even Mrs. Halford seems struck with her want of interest.

"Re," cries Cynthia in a tone of vexation, when he has gone, and they are up in one of the sleeping-rooms preparing for the next stage, which is dreamy indolence, "Re, why do you dislike Mr. Winterburne? I can't imagine any cause — what he has done or left undone; but I know he admires you very much. You don't half appreciate him, for he is really magnificent. Still, I won't complain of that. He may not be of your kind, but you might be a little more than barely civil — for relation's sake."

"I do not dislike him," Regina answers in a measured tone. "I am not enthusiastic and vivacious, like you, and when you come to think" — she smiles very faintly and glances up past Cynthia with an attempt at pleasantry — "I hardly had a chance to say anything."

"It is not merely in talking." Cynthia draws her brows in her familiar, puzzled frown. "It is something indescribable, a manner. And you know you seem to put it on for him alone, or perhaps you have used it latterly to Jasper. It is as if you fenced yourself quite out. O Re, what a grand, high-toned woman of fashion you would make! You would only need to hold up your head and stare and you could wither your most aggressive enemy."

"Am I so haughty?"

"You certainly are. It's very becoming to you, of course. Regina, you are a handsome woman!" Cynthia studies her as if the fact had just dawned on her astonished mind. "*There were some people talking about you last evening*

and wondering who we were, who *you* were more particularly. I'm not pretty enough to stir up any one's envy."

"No one need envy me," Regina cries with an intense bitterness. She is thinking how even here the net seems drawn around her. She is standing between two fires. She cannot turn to the left nor the right, for fear the flame will touch her.

"I was thinking of one thing," she begins with hasty irrelevancy. "You will have to take your turn at managing. I wish these two men could have remained apart. There is a secret antagonism between them."

Cynthia laughs with hearty amusement.

"Upon my word, Regina, you had better take up novel-writing. Secret antagonism is good! Jasper is rather envious of Mr. Winterburne's good-fortune, and somehow sets himself up on a little higher plane; but he isn't half as large or noble, though he has many graces and refinements. Mr. Winterburne couldn't hate anybody — it isn't in him. I do not believe he admires Jasper in a very rapturous fashion, but he doesn't mind meeting him. And they will not meet very often here. How silly to give yourself any uneasiness!"

The uneasiness is for herself, and she cannot be open about it, unfortunately. Something in her womanly delicacy forbids any discussion of Jasper's proposal to her. She has come to consider it a base, unmanly act, half insolence, half a desire to try his power over her. So he would no doubt explain it, and she shrinks in bitter mortification lest he shall some day laugh over it to Perdita. Cynthia would bluntly resent it. Still, she is sorry that Winterburne will feel free to come at present.

Before the day ends another anxiety is added. This is a note from Mr. Sayre in which he begs her to drive down soon, and inspect two cottages that he has found. One quite near to them he hopes will suit.

Fortunately that evening both girls go out under the wing of a friend, and she has the opportunity to discuss *the project* with her mother, who is at first much surprised

and extremely reluctant. Her kindly, sympathetic soul deplores the loneliness of the two who will be left behind.

"I am sure you were loath to leave the old house when they first came, Regina! And you liked it from the very beginning. There is plenty of room for us all, and as we are related—not a very large family either," ramblingly, and glancing up at her daughter in entreaty.

"But you see Mr. Sayre is anxious to get the estate settled, and the Bradleys might like to make some new arrangements. Then it would be so much pleasanter in town during the winter. Cynthia will be going out to parties, and it is so inconvenient to drag people clear up there if we desire to invite them, as we certainly should. We are not compelled to consider the Bradleys at every turn," she says haughtily.

"No, my dear, not compelled, certainly," with a slight emphasis. "But Mr. Bradley has days of being quite feeble" —

"And if you were ill it would be much better for us to be near everything, friends, and the doctor. *We* should have more enjoyments. Is not *our* pleasure worth considering?" and Regina smiles fondly down into her mother's face.

"And do *all* of you want to go?" she asks helplessly. Even if she resists this tall, dignified daughter, she cannot run counter to the other persuasions. She has grown so accustomed to the old house that it seems a part of her very life.

"Of course I shouldn't have consulted them *first*," replies Regina with a tender, complimentary admission.

"Let us talk it over in the morning, then."

So Regina brings her book, and reads aloud until her mother is ready to retire. The young moon has gone down, and the stars have come out in long processions. The pines and hemlocks have lost their distinctness of outline, and look weird in the darkness. She can see nothing out of this level. It is like her life, hemmed around with vague shadows that bring a weird apprehensiveness in their train. *She has attained to some of her desires, but she is*

strangely dissatisfied. There is an unknown quantity in the problem she has set before herself that continually eludes her. So far, she has really done nothing with her life but to acquire knowledge, that to-night has the flavor of ashes. Oh, how do people live rich, satisfying lives, and carry the impress of it in their faces? She has seen a few. Life is so trivial after all, — sleeping, eating, amusement, and she sighs.

The subject of removal comes up over their breakfast-table the next morning, the meal being sent in, and laid in their cosy sitting-room. Cynthia assents with delight and enthusiasm. Perdita is startled, and glances questioningly at Regina.

"It will be much more convenient for you," she says quietly, "and pleasanter in every respect. Or, Perdita, you might prefer to go away somewhere to school for a year or two? I should like to enter a college myself if it were possible."

"Go away!" cries Perdita, turning many shades paler.

"I'll keep the house, and let you go to college," says Cynthia, quite struck with the idea. "What would you take up? You would make a dignified Portia. I can't imagine you delighting in medicine and sick people. There are professorships now for women" —

"I told you long ago that I had no genius;" and Regina fills in the pause rather bitterly. Perhaps her ideals are very high; at all events, she has developed no gift that will accord with them.

"Well, you outshine us in beauty," returns Cynthia good-humoredly. "Were you taking the consensus of the meeting about leaving Bradley House? Oh, do let us come down, and have a snug little cottage, and be our olden selves again. I don't enjoy being up on stilts so much of the time, and it is dismal in the winter. Isn't it a kind of empty honor — this sitting in the chairs, and eating off the tables, of your ancestors? Dit, you have expressed no opinion. Regina, did you mention a school? Here's your one opportunity of emancipation;" and she glances at Perdita, who is trembling with excitement.

"Regina, what wild schemes have entered your head?" exclaims her mother. "Send Perdita away?"

"Oh, you will not let her!" Perdita flings her arms around the neck of her mother by adoption, and kisses her with a passion of tenderness.

"My dear Perdita, it was merely a suggestion for you to accept or not," returns Regina, much annoyed at the panic she has created.

"The removal will be quite bad enough!" protests Mrs. Halford.

"Really, we need do nothing," the elder says in a dispirited tone. "I meant it for the best, for our comfort;" and her eyes fill with tears. How can she endure facing Jasper daily. Shall she tell them all her reasons?

"My dear Regina!" Cynthia's sympathy is immediately aroused. If she has some deeper reason, her desires ought to be respected. If she has grown tired of the isolation of the old house, of the dignity that has at times rather fretted them all, let them then make no objection to her descent.

Cynthia has a smoother way of putting things. She is more persuasive.

"Mother dear," she begins smilingly, "let us consider its advantages. What the Bradleys will do without us I can't imagine," and she makes a funny little *moue*. "But they might leave us in the lurch. I did hear Jasper suggesting some city amusements during the winter. I suppose Beverly pleasures are rather mild for a travelled young gentleman. A summer may do very well, but I fancy him rather restless, needing fresh fields. Mr. Sayre means to press them for a decision, and, who knows? we may be warned out."

By the time the meal has ended, she has them all in an amicable frame of mind. What charm does Cynthia possess? Has Regina ever given her full credit for all her virtues?

Perdita has no argument in favor of remaining that she *has the courage to put into words*. She has a firm belief

that she is beloved. Why should they not be openly engaged? The stolen interviews have been daring and sweet, but it will be more comfortable to have an avowed lover. She is quite certain no one but Regina would raise a dissenting voice.

The elder asks Cynthia to drive in town with her, but she has a previous engagement with Miss Hilliard. Perdita glances up eagerly.

"Would you like to go?"

"I want some things that I have forgotten — two pairs of gloves and my white cloth jacket."

"Come with me then." Has she not been rather sharp with this poor little butterfly? Perhaps Jasper would stand a much better chance of happiness with her, in her utter faith, her sweet credulities, her innocent vanities, and her passion for music, truer than his it may be. Regina is quite certain that all her efforts at shaping him to superior nobleness have been in vain. How much can one influence another person?

"Oh, may I go?" Perdita is bright and smiling again.

"While I am busy with Mr. Sayre you may drive up." Surely there can no harm happen to the child in that brief while. Regina will show her perfect confidence.

The drive down the long, winding road is delightful. Both are occupied with their own thoughts, and Regina cannot ramble over commonplaces for the mere love of talking. It is her misfortune, perhaps, that she likes thinking so much better, and just now she does not care to disturb Perdita's contented mood. There have been so many uncomfortable outbreaks of late that she is satisfied with the serenity.

At Mr. Sayre's door she steps out, after giving the reins to Perdita.

"You will not need more than half an hour!" she says; "I shall be waiting here for you."

Mr. Sayre comes out, touches his hat to Perdita, and *takes Miss Halford to inspect the cottages, while the young girl starts her horse onward with a gentle admonition, and*

he trots on up to Bradley House. Old Abram, the gardener, is cutting the grass with his scythe, and trimming the edges with a sickle. No new-fangled rattling lawn-mowers for him, cutting the very heart out of every root.

"Ah, miss, yer humsick, I des say ;" and he grins as he rubs his stubbly chin. "The old gentleman went fer a walk a few minutes back, 'n' the young 'un off somewher — let me fassen ther pony an' yer won't sile yer gloves. Cats in gloves catch no mice, I've hearn say ;" and he chuckles.

Mrs. Crouse lets her in, and she runs lightly up-stairs, unlocks her drawers, and exhumes her treasures. Is that a soft whistle of a voice she knows full well? She wraps her parcel daintily, throws the cloak over her arm, and trips across the hall, unbars the door that leads to the cross passage, and peers into the empty room.

"Jasper!" she cries softly, "Jasper!"

He must be up in the tower room. As she crosses the floor something on the table catches her eye, arrests her step. A thick, yellow, curious sheet of paper nearly covered with writing in a coarse, round hand. Something holds her spellbound. With the distinctness of a vision that imprints itself on the brain at once, she reads — "The last Will and Testament of Silas Bradley, Esqr." The room swims round. She is rooted to the spot. All that follows is a blurred mass, but she would not care to read it if she could.

A step comes down the stair. She makes a tremendous effort and moves a few paces, but it is a ghostly face that confronts him.

"Perdita!" he cries sharply, "where did you come from? How did you get in? How" — dared you! he is about to say, then his tone changes, his arms are around her, and she is sobbing on his shoulder with hysterical passion.

"My darling, my little darling, you can't imagine how you startled me! Are you quite sure you are no ghost?" and he is kissing passionately amid the tears, gathering *her to his heart that she feels throbbing against hers,*

sweeping her off her feet in a swift, bewildering current that she can not, that she does not desire to, stem. "Did you drop from the clouds — who is with you?" suddenly, as his face turns curiously white.

"No one. Regina came down to Mr. Sayre's. I wanted some articles I had forgotten — and — I wanted to see you, Jasper," with piteous entreaty.

"Yes," nervously leading her across the room in a blind kind of way. "Oh, you came through this hall. It is always fastened on your side;" and he laughs with a thin, shrill sound unusual to him. "I can hardly believe you real; may I pinch you to see? Why, you *look* like a ghost. What did you do to take the pink out of your cheeks, and the red from your lips?"

She is drenched in scarlet then, but only for an instant, when the pallor returns, and she trembles visibly, clings to him in wordless terror.

"Come down and let me give you a little wine." He carries her as if she were a baby, and takes her to the shaded parlor that is cool and dimly lighted, and brings her the merest sip in a fragile, little glass. "There, now you shall tell me what startled you so. Was it a mysterious noise, or a mysterious combination that wore a ghostly aspect to your sweet eyes that were looking for something else, for *me*, perhaps?" smiling softly. "Tell me, tell me," imperiously.

Her tongue cleaves to her mouth, and will not even allow the lips to open. He faces her steadily.

"You little fluttering bird, it was just nothing at all;" and he laughs with a sound of dainty triumph. "You were in a strange place, you were afraid of not finding me. And I shouldn't easily have forgiven you if you had gone without hunting me up. What profound secret was there back of your desire to see me? Come, I must have the sweet confession."

His tender, adoring manner quite restores her. And she remembers she must not waste her time, for Regina will fall to questioning her if she is late.

"O Jasper!" she cries piteously, "they are all going away from Bradley House. Regina" —

"They are away now. Come, your senses are not quite clear yet. Give me some more important news."

"I mean they are planning to live in town. Regina has gone to look at some houses with Mr. Sayre. Mother did not want to at first, but they talked her over. And maybe I shall be sent away to school."

"Do they suspect that — that I care for you?" he asks. Only a little while ago he asked Regina to marry him. He could laugh at the farce he makes of his life — but all lives are half comedy except to these tragic little people like Perdita. He will marry her — it is best now.

"I — I think they do," she admits tremulously.

"I may as well confess — Regina is jealous of you, my wee bit rosebud. Regina wants to reign over all hearts, she can bear no rivals. But we will outwit them all. You know enough. There are to be no more schools for you."

"I don't mind — if I can stay at home."

"Does it matter whether we marry soon or late, since we shall marry sometime? I want you for my very own. And we will surprise them by a step" —

"O Jasper, if you love me, if you will let me belong to you, I can wait in patience!"

She is such a simple child that the whole world revolves around this fascination at present. He in his selfish dalliance has made it so intensely dear and absorbing that her very life would seem to go out in darkness if it ended. He has piqued her with alternate hope and fear, with tenderness and indifference, with those delicate attentions to others that have stung her soul to jealousy. She has known that he loved her — this is not his first confession, but it is the first time he has spoken of their future together, and in one great bound of delight she forgives him any pang he has caused. She has never really believed Regina would marry him, only her influence took him in such different channels. *There was the hurt, impatient sense of being out-grown. And now —*

The softly shining brown eyes express their supreme content. The dewy lips smile. She is so pretty in her warm, glowing tints, her flesh-and-blood loveliness.

"But I shall not be patient," he declares with his imperious smile. "We have known each other all summer. We are relatives, we have lived together, and we have not quarrelled *very* much. What more is there to know? I suppose Regina would want all a man's life from the moment he stepped out of the cradle! I haven't distinguished myself in any way, and I may never make a fortune. Why, how do you know but that I have had an eye on your money? We always forget you are quite an heiress! If you have any serious objection to me as a husband, state it now;" and he stands before her smiling in his handsome audacity.

She smiles too. "Hers! hers!" the seductive refrain surges in her soul. The sense of possessorship in the mysterious bond that is to come — marriage — fills her thoughts to the exclusion of aught else. He understands the entrancement, and it does please him.

"This is our secret at present," he says with his beguiling smile. "Remember, I trust you with *my* secret; it is not yours alone. And I know you will be true always, forever, in everything, my little darling."

"Yes," she murmurs between his kisses. Then a dull yellow ghost rises up, but she shrinks away from it. Why should she question his secret, perhaps not even his?

"I must go," she cries in sudden alarm. "Why — how long have I been here? Regina gave me half an hour. Perhaps I ought not have told you" — and her face clouds over with anxiety.

"I shall wait to receive information from headquarters," he says with a bright laugh. "Yes, I am glad you came, glad you told me. I shall take some steps to secure my own little fluttering bird. Depend upon it we shall not be separated for long."

Dolly has been pawing up the path and nibbling the grass *Abram* has brought in a pile before her.

"I shall take you down to the foot of the hill;" and he assists her in daintily, then follows. He is very bright and amusing, and thanks her again for hunting him up, "for I might have loitered around like an idiot and never have seen you at all," he says; "but you are such a sweet little blossom!"

Regina has been delayed longer than she expected, and Perdita reaches the tryst first, but a moment or two later she sees the tall, slim figure in its soft, smoke-colored dress. Ah, she shall never envy Regina again. She may win the admiration of the whole world, she may gain the knowledge of *savants*, but she, Perdita, will be satisfied with love. She is so happy that she proffers amends for her temper of the morning.

"I was cross about the house," she begins in a coaxing voice, one of her charms. "It is lovely down here in the town. Since you like it better" —

"We will drive around and view a new prospect, not ours quite yet," and Regina smiles kindly down into the little face she is willing to meet half way. "We must all have our say. The cottage nearest Mr. Sayre's is quite small. This has two such roomy piazzas that I know mother will prefer it in summer, and it has a heater which will delight Cynthia. There is a pretty garden and enough fruit and a small stable, for of course we cannot give up Dolly."

"Oh," says Perdita, "I know the place well. The Hartman girls live only two doors below."

It is on a pleasant, shaded street. There is no such broad outlook as at Bradley House, no such wealth of woods and grassy fields, but one cannot live with nature all the time, and Regina wonders if it does not make one rather tense and intolerant of smaller subjects, impatient with the inferiority of a large part of humanity. She has a misgiving that she has been too far on the outside rims, that she must come nearer her kind in daily life and take a deeper interest in the ordinary wants, if she is to make her work of any real service. Admiration is not a wholly satisfying *sustenance*; there is a worthier one — love.

As they turn again they face Jasper Bradley who pauses, then steps to the curb and exchanges a pleasant greeting. A warm color flies into Perdita's face, and a sensation of deceitfulness stings her. Yet how many times she has met Jasper and rambled through the woods with him and held her peace!

"I have not had time to inquire of Perdita if your father is well," Regina asks with friendliness.

"Quite as well as usual. I think he has been out all the morning. Oh, you were up to the house?"

Perdita nods under the shade of her large hat.

"You found a lonely place, then," he responds carelessly. "I sometimes think I am getting tired of it. What it will be in winter I dare not even think;" and he shrugs his shoulders in an expressive fashion.

There is so much to talk about that Perdita can keep her own counsel easily. For the first time it is a burden. She has never been called to account for every moment or every friend, and in one way there is a delicious thrill when she thinks of her lover, really hers. She salves her conscience with the certainty that he will acknowledge it in true orthodox style. No one will really object. They will say she is too young, but there are brides at the hotel younger than she. And no one can be so cruel as to refuse her the happiness of her whole life. She is eager and restless and yet very charming, with a touch of tenderness that is like the Perdita of two months ago.

Jasper is over that evening and dances with the gay, young people bent on amusement. He studies Perdita keenly, and feels that his secret will be quite safe when he attaches her to himself in indissoluble bonds. That is his surest step.

There follows a week or so of unwonted interest for the Halfords. Miss Hilliard comes, and the very first day Regina finds her a striking and interesting figure in the little circle. She is certainly an attractive woman. Her voice seems to hold a charm, her manner has some grace that distinguishes it, and her misfortune is just enough for re-

spectful sympathy. The fact, too, that Mr. Winterburne is beginning to be so well known as one of the coming successful men is not without significance. But there is some occult charm in her, Regina is forced to admit, that attracts not a few of the most noted men and women to her side. She is not pedantic, yet she is at home on the larger questions of the day: she knows what is going on in the world of art, she seems to understand the rare secret of entertaining without effort, of pleasing with no anxiety. Regina moves among them with a grace that cannot divest itself of haughtiness, that is indeed commented upon to her disfavor, and yet she does not mean to arrogate to herself any special virtue. It is the old, curious problem never yet satisfactorily solved as to what is due to money, and what part it takes in shaping character. She will not bow down to the golden calf. Her dispute with Jasper has sent her to the olden extreme where Norman Winterburne is concerned. But the two men do not clash in any degree, hardly indeed meet on any common ground. Winterburne is not a dancing man, and Jasper does not concern himself with the question of benefit to any human soul but his own.

Cynthia is Miss Halford's shadow, and they make a most entertaining couple. Perdita seems to slip out of her grasp, and how can one attend to everything, when the last days of the season are so full? Some of those who take autumn for their journeyings are going; others, who flit from place to place for incidents to count up on their fingers over winter luncheons, come in for a few days, and glance about superciliously to see if there is anything worth remembering, any people who may be talked about either in praise or scandal. How wearisome it all is!

It is just then that Jasper Bradley electrifies not only her, but the circle who have been watching what seems an odd flirtation between the handsome young fellow and the soft-eyed girl whose curious brown tints harmonize so oddly with his golden ones. She looks such a mere child; but the family connection covers the piquant familiarity.

Perdita has gone out one morning without a word to any

one. At noon she and Jasper make their appearance; he in jaunty defiance, she trembling and agitated.

"My dear Mrs. Halford," he exclaims insouciantly, "allow me to present to you my wife, Mrs. Jasper Bradley. We decided not to have any fuss, but were married an hour ago at E——. Here are the legal documents. At two we start on our bridal trip. You are not to blame Perdita—I over-persuaded her."

Perdita clasps her arms around Mrs. Halford's neck, and gives way to the emotion that has threatened to master her more than once since she started off on her brief journey, not then really aware of its import.

"Everybody was so busy pleasuring," he says with a satirical laugh, "that we decided to bother no one for consent. I merely informed my father. Does no one mean to wish us joy?"

Regina meets his eyes with bitter, silent scorn. It is Cynthia who first recovers from the surprise.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SLINGS OF FORTUNE

You have too much respect upon the world ;
They lose it that do buy it with much care.

Merchant of Venice.

MOUNT SARDIS seems to have saved its most sparkling if not its best wine to the last. At the hotel dinner something gets whispered about, and the young couple are quite aware of it before the meal is ended. Jasper lingers over his fruit—now that he has surprised them with one daring step, which was certainly necessary to another, treading fast on its heels, and likely to create still greater consternation; he can afford to face it with a serenity that is almost insolent. Perdita is hidden under the friendly shelter of her wide-brimmed hat, too much frightened and too deeply excited to know whether she is happy or not, and aware of only one fact: that she is Jasper's to the end of her life—a girl's dream, who thinks death of the beloved one the cruelest of misfortunes, that can hardly happen to her, indeed, since she will go first.

Jasper glances at his watch and makes a significant little motion. Perdita rises with downcast eyes and wild-rose cheeks, and would meekly follow her lord, but he draws her arm through his. The carriage is waiting for them, and they start out on their journey together. She has said good-by to those who have been nearest and dearest.

All the air is full of gossip. Such a bomb thrown into the social camp must scatter fragments far and wide. If Jasper Bradley had studied for weeks, he could not have struck Regina in a more sensitive chord. She has a horror of this meretricious notoriety, as all refined natures must have, and she has been cultivating hers to the extreme of

morbidness, as strenuous souls are apt to do unconsciously. That there can be any sharper stab she does not believe. Does fate maliciously hunt up spent arrows and fling them anew at us as we plod through the valley of humiliation?

Cynthia has an afternoon engagement, and boldly keeps it. "Yes," she admits, "Perdita Cope, who is a cousin and adopted daughter, not their own sister, is truly married. The only surprise is the suddenness; but Mr. Bradley is a distant cousin, and they have been sharing Bradley House with him and his father since their return to Beverly, where the elder Mr. Bradley spent all his early years. Of course, they all knew of the *tendresse*. So many people have heard of the Bradley fortune and the search for the heirs. They, the Halfords, had decided to leave the old house and come down in town." And Cynthia laughingly declares it must have been the prospect of a separation that brought about this climax.

She is very straightforward, and believes when the truth is frankly acknowledged, the keenest edge is taken off of whatever may follow. It is a consolation to her in being spared the continual haunting ghost of curiosity. Regina's plan of a new home seems now a master stroke of policy.

There is one duty left. They have accepted an invitation for the evening, to accompany Miss Hilliard to a select, artistic gathering. Regina has met this little clique, and enjoyed it very much, but they will not go now. Tomorrow must be devoted to making arrangements for leaving, which would come only a few days later if this had not occurred.

"I suppose we must go and bid Miss Hilliard good-by," Regina admits reluctantly. She is thankful that some of the "nicest people," with whom they have been really friendly, have gone before this *esclandre*.

"Yes. She can take our excuses. Though I think you are foolish for staying away. An elopement is a respectable marriage after all, especially when the parties come immediately home and announce it. And it is because

Perdita seems so young to us that it looks unnatural. She is past seventeen, and very much in love with Jasper."

There is no comment.

"Come, will you go? As well have it over at once."

It is hardly dusk. Miss Hilliard will have finished her dinner, and in the interim enjoying the pleasure of a reclining chair, on her favorite corner of the piazza. At this time she is very likely to be alone. To-morrow, about mid-afternoon, Mr. Winterburne will make his appearance, and remain for the night. Regina feels relieved at the prospect of not seeing him. She wants to recover her equilibrium first.

There has been a very stylish party at Mount Sardis for a few days, the aggressively fashionable people who travel with men servants and maids, horses and dogs, and one of their number, a decided young woman of four or five and twenty, who has been engaged to the son of an English nobleman, but found him quite too much in debt, and who is looking up an American of wealth now, has watched Regina Halford across the hotel table.

"Her face has an oddly familiar look," says Miss Nichol to her aunt, a dowager in diamonds. "Can it be any one we have ever known? Such a magnificent complexion, real too! How any one manages it out of childhood! She looks like a young princess. And her dress betrays her knowledge of good and evil."

Miss Nichol comes to envy her two or three points of superior fineness, and inquires who she may be. There is a great deal of old blue blood in Beverly, she is aware.

To-day the Halfords have been so thoroughly canvassed that a little more or less can hardly be called impertinent. They are, after all, rather new to wealth; they have come from the great city of extremes, and they cannot have been very high up the social stairway.

The Nichols are at the other end of the long porch when Regina ascends the steps. A flaring light within outlines her. She is very pale, but loftiness is enthroned in every *feature*. Her figure has the pose of a young goddess, and

her step the grace of a nymph. Why any one out of patriциandom should be so dowered is a mystery, a jarring, and an offence. Her greeting to Miss Hilliard is stately, quite in contrast with Cynthia's effusiveness.

"I've just placed her," says Miss Nichol to her aunt, then rises and floats slowly over to Miss Hilliard, with whom she has established rather friendly terms. It is only to make some unimportant inquiry, but she drops into a vacant chair, exhaling a delicate perfume that is not unlike the fragrant dew of the summer night, and studies Regina intently.

Miss Hilliard does not at first introduce them. She is a little annoyed at the interruption, and she has seen evidences of Miss Nichol's arrogance. But as a sense of awkwardness seems to encompass them, at some reference in a general way she merely repeats the names, not making it a formal presentation.

"Ah," says Miss Nichol in a delicately insolent manner, as she leans slightly forward, shaking out the rare perfume, and gazing at Regina with an innocent air of surprise, "I was thinking when I saw you in the phaeton yesterday that I had met you before! You were one of the girls at Madame Lissner's, were you not? I remember that several of us," with the least shade of emphasis upon the "us," "used to envy you your figure. What care you must have taken to keep the lines correct! And what exquisite gowns Madame Lissner used to concoct! I've had French gowns that did not suit me nearly so well. I suppose her death was a great shock to you all."

It is the crucial moment of Regina Halford's life. Ah, how bitterly she had hated the whole thing! There were kinds of employment she could have respected, but that had always been distasteful. And here the old ghost is thrust at her, at this moment when all the forces of her soul have risen in revolt at the strain put upon them. But she holds her head with a high, pure dignity, not a muscle, *not a line*, of her face wavers, and only for an instant does *she feel* the heat of a rising flush.

"Yes," with the most exquisite intonation. "My mother had no son, and in her time of adversity I had to take the place until our fortunes mended. And I think it gave me such a thorough contempt for fine dressing, for the time, interest, and temper wasted upon the subject, that I shall go in plain attire all my days."

"Ah, were we so very *difficile*?" her tormentor asks, rather disconcerted by the unswerving dignity.

"I do not know. I had nothing to do with customers. I only judge from Madame Lissner's weariness, and her death," Regina returns pointedly. Then she resumes her conversation with Miss Hilliard, quite ignoring the unwelcome guest, and rises to depart. She is proud of standing there in youth and beauty, of showing no irritation at the ill-bred daughter of fashion, as if serenely conscious of her superiority.

"Good-night," she says in her soft, well-trained voice. She will not even make it a good-by.

"Let me walk a little distance with you," Miss Hilliard begins, rising and passing the other without a word of excuse. "And I am so sorry you will not go to-night. I wanted you particularly to meet a Mr. De Maurier. And only this morning Mr. Stafford told me his grandmother was a Bradley, and that it was her cousin who lived here at Beverly.

Miss Nichol has been a little premature. For the last six weeks she has crossed Mr. Stafford's path with the nicest design. Miss Hilliard *can* mar her plans; that she will, judging from herself, goes without saying.

"I do not need to explain that I have hardly an acquaintance with Miss Nichol," says Miss Hilliard. "Mr. Stafford introduced us several days ago; and they have rooms at the cottage. Their dogs could not be accommodated at the hotel," with a touch of irony.

"I wonder," begins Regina with a curious deliberateness, "why what is commendable in a man is less so in a woman? why one kind of work is respected, and another *is not*? I think there is a great deal of humbug talked

and written about the dignity of labor. I gave up my own plans when misfortunes came to us. I did what I could." The pride in her tone is almost bitter. "I did not like the employment that came to me — I never pretended to, though there are things I should have been delighted to take up" —

"You are a brave girl," Miss Hilliard says, as her prejudices are swept away.

"No, I am not brave. I am not even courageous. I have not been aiming at the heroic ideals at all. I have been trying to please myself since the strain of necessity has been removed. I hardly know what goes to the making of a noble character," she declares with passionate sincerity. "For one can be refined and elegant, and perform all the lesser duties of life with no regard for the higher issues of absolute, unswerving truth. No, do not commend me Good-night;" and she pauses abruptly — to part with her.

Cynthia reaches up for a kiss. Miss Hilliard notes the other pale, strained face, with its weary eyes that are luminous even in the fast-falling dusk. She begins to understand how Norman came to love her when she was the burden-bearer of the family. She would fain comfort her, but it cannot be by platitudes, and Regina has always held herself so subtly aloof. She does press the cold hand with a heartfelt meaning, but it lies apathetically in hers. Regina is in no mood for sympathy even. She has still to learn the grandeur of a true, exalted pity, so different from egotistical interest.

"It was atrocious!" Cynthia says, when they are well out of hearing. The side avenues are partially deserted. The long plaza in front of the hotels and the winding walks through the shrubbery are the greatest favorites at this hour. "Did you ever know that — beast! It is all one can call her! We ought to be thankful that she didn't stand in the public square and proclaim it! Yesterday morning *she* was sweetly drawing Jasper into her net. Do you suppose she was angry that a man should dare entertain an *idea* that another woman could have attractions?"

"I do not think it that," returns Regina wearily. "If I had thrust myself within her circle and demanded recognition — why, I don't even know which her circle is, there are so many of them in a large city — and it is not my nature to be intrusive under ~~any~~ any circumstances," she announces with decisive pride; a fact Cynthia is well aware of.

"I can't see any excuse for such hatefulness — it is really that! What is it to her how we have been employed? I don't smell of drugs and herbs, and you might have come of Quaker stock for your severe taste. The ridiculous point of it all seems to be that the necessity laid upon you in any stress is supposed to be some inherent perversion of your own taste. See here, Regina. Do you suppose everybody would be so ready to do honor to Norman Winterburne if he were not a prospective millionaire? if he were a day journeyman in a mill or foundry? It is the mere money, after all. And if money makes people forget a man's past delinquencies, or raises his virtues to a higher rank or grander glitter, why shouldn't it adorn the past misfortunes or heroic efforts of a woman's life?"

"Women are not so generous to women," says Regina with a touch of cold scorn in her voice. "When three or four of them sat in the fitting-room at Madame Lissner's they used to tear their absent friends in pieces and shreds: criticise, ridicule, pick every little social flaw, boast how they snubbed and cut and mortified their sister women. They go to each other's houses because this one has a position, that one gives elegant luncheons or dinners, another has friends they desire to know. I dare say Miss Nichol was among them. If she can find satisfaction in her rudeness" —

"And the envy was inches thick! Regina, I never felt so glad that you were handsome and have so much style. You have been admired on every hand!"

She makes a gesture of weary disdain. Has she nothing but material charms?

"I should like to strike back! O Regina, if you would *go this evening!*"

"I couldn't." And the pale, weary face excites Cynthia's sympathy.

She would be deeply gratified if she could see Miss Nichol spending her evening with two or three young fellows who bore her immensely, envying Miss Hilliard, Mr. Stafford and Mr. De Maurier. She cannot deny Miss Halford's grandfathers and grandmothers, and she is aware the Staffords are immeasurably proud of their descent. If she were in Miss Hilliard's place she knows she could not pass by such a splendid opportunity for a return shaft. Her only comfort is in saying to her aunt, —

"The insufferable impertinence of that dress-making girl going around with the air of a princess! That class ought to be kept to its natural level!"

"Didn't some one say they were Bradleys? The Bradleys and the Staffords are connected. There is a Judge Bradley I used to know years ago."

Miss Nichol does not feel quite so confident of her wisdom.

Mrs. Halford sways between fear and anticipation for the youngest of her flock. Jasper has seemed admirable to her indiscriminating mind, but she is quite sure Perdita needs some training in household arts, since she may give him a violin sonata — she is not quite sure that is right — for his supper, or he may find her rambling in the woods culling wild flowers and mocking the birds. The step is incomprehensible.

It is so to Regina as well. Could she have done anything to prevent? Might she not have studied the family interests instead of her own intellectual desires? She feels so uncertain on all the subjects that were vital and urgent a month ago.

"Jasper has chosen the heiress," says Cynthia in a low, dry tone.

"Has that had anything to do with it?" Regina wonders.

"Dear mother," and Cynthia lays her arm caressingly on Mrs. Halford's shoulder, "don't worry about Perdita. *We could* all have advised her, doubtless, and even then she

might have insisted upon going her own way. You will have to take me for your confidante now, to pet, and to scold when you feel like it "—

"I hope I have not *scolded*, Cynthia," she cries with a touch of injured dignity.

"O momsie, no!" and Cynthia laughs. "But if you should ever feel it a sort of safety-valve! Let us all go to bed believing Perdita supremely happy with the man of her choice. For no one has aided or abetted or had any hand in this startling episode."

It is quite late when they retire, and Regina cannot sleep. Her failures seem to rise up with cruel distinctness. There has been a lack of rightful aims; she has been studying herself, putting in little bits that she admires, pruning here, training there, yet she has not made character at all. It has been a pretentious, cumbersome, beautiful, useless pagoda with pretty bells chiming here and there in appreciative winds, but it is not in any sense a temple of the soul. The futile nothings of idealism have been disporting themselves among the serious endeavors of human life. Among them is no vivid taste of happiness, no sweet reward of well-doing. She despises herself for the trivialities she has considered matters of grave import. Has she not been drawing a line, setting people in places *she* thinks meet and proper for them? She has done it delicately, with no rudeness. Miss Hilliard has her gift, and it does help her to a definite standing in the world. It is a purpose. And she has no gift, oh, bitter, burning thought! Yes, there is her beauty and grace, but she has no longing to become purely a society woman, and what else can she do with it? Even Cynthia has a truer conception of worthy living than she with her strenuous endeavors. She does not at that instant realize that youth does not comprise all the wisdom of the ages, all the experience of the wise.

They spend the next morning planning their removal.

"Though what Perdita will do alone in that great house *I can't imagine*," sighs Mrs. Halford. "And she knows

nothing about housekeeping. She should have had a year's training, foolish child."

"You don't imagine for a moment they will remain?" cries Cynthia energetically. "They will flit like wild bees, tasting the sweets of hotels, theatres, operas, and all manner of pleasures. Jasper has been rather bored and restless of late, and Mr. Bradley has recovered his health, though I do not believe *he* would want to go galloping round the world. It is almost a pity for Jasper to have the place. He really seems too small to fill it."

She thinks of Winterburne with his potent personality.

Regina thinks of him also. He will be over this afternoon, and she does not desire to see him; indeed, every fibre of her being is in desperate protest. She has known all along that she was no favorite with Miss Hilliard, and yet that senseless, foolish, impertinent attack will rouse her sympathetic womanhood. She hates to think of it being told over to him, of all men. He will show his appreciation of her so decisively, and she does not want even the praise of his eyes, since his estimate of her would be based on false premises. She is too sincere to accept the homage, and she is not ready for the more subtle distinction that always clouds the atmosphere about him for her.

Immediately after luncheon she leaves them, charging Cynthia to look after their mother, and if she is not home by nine they are not to expect her: she will spend the night with Mrs. Sayre.

"Oh!" cries Cynthia disappointedly. "And there's sure to be some one in." She will not mention names.

"You must do the honors then. The time is so short, you see," with an air of importance that allows no demur.

"But *do* come back. There is no sense in your staying."

"Mrs. Sayre will want to hear of the event at first hand," Regina replies with a delicate emphasis.

The hotel hack is going down and she takes her place in it, since now it is for the convenience of passengers coming back, and she will not be subjected to curious eyes. There is a somewhat gruff, elderly man and a foolishly indul-

gent mother of three children. Both parties rather divert her.

It is a fine day early in September, but vegetation of all kinds has kept fresh and lovely from heavy dews and occasional rains. Here and there a maple hangs out a solitary twig of red leaves. The gardens are bright with a profusion of imperious autumnal flowers that hold up their heads like marching regiments. The bird songs are not so jubilant as those of June, and the insects prolong their notes in a wavering manner that is almost pathetic.

Regina finds that the tenant has gone out of the cottage, and two men are there making some repairs. She looks up a woman to come in and do the cleaning — the household matters gravitate naturally to her. Then she strolls up the hill, busy with a tangle of thoughts that surprises her. For all of life appears changed to her. The future has an inscrutable cloud hovering about its most familiar aspects. Not two years since she came here with such high resolves, with a vital force that seemed ready to take hold of the highest purposes. She has educated herself up to an impossible standard, yes, she has disdained the common round. Oh, what is the meaning of all this unrest? The unhesitating belief in the possibility of many things has merged into a kind of cynical enlightenment. She has been compelled to recede from the hasty generalizations that she has taken for truth, and feels stranded on a strange shore.

Mr. Bradley is sitting on the porch in the afternoon sunshine. He is like a picture with his thin, clear-cut face that would be at once pronounced aristocratic, his fine white skin where the wrinkles seem to lie delicately instead of taking the triumphant clutch of coming age. His silvery hair, his sloping shoulders, his white hands with their long nails, have such a gentlemanly aspect that you can hardly imagine him as being of any real service to the world, except for adornment.

"Ah," he says with a nod, rubbing the thin hands cautiously, "I thought you would come. Did my boy surprise you beyond measure?" and he gives a weak little laugh

verging on insolence. "I could imagine the scene when he walked in with the youngest of you all on his arm. You girls do not appear to be in tremendous demand" —

"There was no scene," interrupts Regina. "Mother felt hurt, as was natural, at the lack of confidence and respect. But we supposed it would end that way presently."

"No — did you really? Why, I thought once it would be *you*. But you are rather too high, too grand. A man don't want such an overwhelming sort of wife. I don't believe you are the kind to marry. And your sister had better take that long-headed chap over yonder," nodding his head down the river. "Though I doubt if he will always come out on top!" and he gives another rather shrill, unmeaning laugh.

Regina's face flushes with indignation. It almost seems as if Mr. Bradley must have been drinking. His eyes have a shifty, exultant light, as if he gloated over something. Surely marrying Perdita cannot have proved such a great victory when there was no real opposition.

"Your son told you that we were making preparations to go in town?" she questions coldly.

"Yes." He nods and laughs again unpleasantly. "I shall miss your mother. I like your mother very much. Well, I like you all. We have had a pleasant summer together, but winter comes to every season, to life, to all things. It is best that you should go, of course. You came first, but you had no real right."

"We never pretended to have the sole right to Bradley House," Regina says in a somewhat contemptuous tone. "You have decided then to keep it" —

"My dear young woman, there has been no question of keeping it that I know of. It always belonged to us, to me; I was born here. Circumstances" — and he pauses, looks terrified, and seems to shrink into himself.

"Jasper will return here?"

"Why, where else would he go?" irritably. "He *cannot* leave me alone for more than a few days. My health *is not good*. Of course he will come back. He and Perdita

can amuse themselves fiddling and dancing if they like. Good heavens! You should have seen *her* dance before she grew too stout. That put an end to it only in character pieces. What was I saying?" his eyes full of alarm. "I was dreaming. I used to be fond enough of theatres when I was a young man. Jasper hated them after a while."

Regina walks across the porch, and raises the old-time lion's-head knocker.

"Have you come back to stay?" he asks, rising and turning his eyes sharply upon her.

"I have not." Miss Halford is incensed.

"But I want you to," he declares fretfully. "It's very lonesome without Jasper. Your mother and you, and — and Cynthia. When will you come? Come to-morrow, and stay until he returns. Have you any idea why he married that little brown thing? She isn't pretty" —

Martha opens the door. She only returned yesterday, and is surprised at the turn affairs have taken.

"And you mean to leave such a child as Miss Perdita alone with them two men, and one on 'em half crazy!" she exclaims. "I'd as soon put her in the lion's den, an' be done with it! Whatever possessed her to go off and get married that way? He's charmed her in my opinion, an' you ought all of you to kept a better lookout. What does make you go way just at this time?"

Regina explains that it is no new thought, that "Mr. Bradley will become the absolute owner of the house, and there will be a new master and new mistress, and it will be much more prudent for them to be quite away. Mrs. Crouse will look after Mrs. Jasper's comfort."

"Well, I'd never leave her here, never!" is Martha's asseveration.

"You would have to leave her with her husband;" and Regina gives a dry, unmirthful smile. "It would be unlawful to separate them."

"Whatever possessed that child, Heaven only knows. *He must have done it along of his violin.* She was just

like a charmed creetur when he played, and them brown eyes of hern would grow bigger and wider, and she'd follow him round. Yes, depend upon it, the music did the business. Lord! I've heard him make his fiddle cry real tears, I know."

Regina goes through the rooms that Martha has been putting in very tolerable order. Some stores are to be sent up.

"And we may come to-morrow," says the young lady.

"To-morrow! That's Friday. O Miss Regina, don't! I wouldn't take a journey or come into a house on Friday, for there'd be nothing but bad luck;" and Martha's tone is imploring.

Regina smiles at the superstition, but she has a respect for the woman's feelings, a certain forethought also of having dismal verifications later on, that will not be cheerful to listen to, and impossible to combat.

"Very well. Our week doesn't end until Saturday, and I suppose we will need to-morrow to pack. Then on the very first of the following week, we shall make ready to go to the new house. I have no idea when Jasper means to return."

They have adopted his Christian name to avoid confusion, and partly on his own insistence; but Regina is glad of an excuse to go back to the more formal order. There is a curious fear in her soul already concerning Perdita. It is not any bodily harm she apprehends, but an intangible premonition of coming unhappiness. For if Jasper cared at all for *her*, then he married Perdita from pique. The deeper significance is whether he is capable of a generous, tender love.

She gets matters settled with Martha, and then goes her way. On the porch Mr. Bradley stops her again, and begs that they will come as soon as possible. He cannot be left alone. They surely will not disappoint him?

He appears nervously in earnest, and his voice is *tremulous*. Regina has never settled upon any definite estimate of his character, but she has not been able to cordially

admire him. Sometimes he has awakened a peculiar pitying interest, at others an ill-defined distrust. At first his violent claim to everything had proved rather trying, but of late he has seemed perfectly satisfied. She will be relieved to shut him out of the coming life — with a good many other things. She means to begin quite anew.

The Sayres are glad to have her for a guest again, though all is much changed since she first came up, a tall slip of a girl. It seems now as if she must always have been a woman. Perdita's marriage is talked over in its best aspects, but no one can define any probabilities.

"I pushed Mr. Bradley early in the week for a decision and a settlement," says Mr. Sayre. "There could be but one course. He admitted that they meant to keep the place. Now he will have to pay out only two shares, and I shall see that you have your money."

"We shall be so glad to have you in town," declares Mrs. Sayre with her fond, staid smile. "You know I was your first friend in Beverly."

Altogether Regina feels she has been of some service, that she is not utterly without discrimination. She has yielded to various theoretical fancies about Jasper, and she understands that a more designing man might make her feel that she had trifled with him. The puerile jealousy he has displayed does not touch her as keenly as the insolence. He may seek to amuse Perdita with silly jests of her liking for him — she would rather have it Perdita than any other woman.

By some subtle control over herself, she will not allow her thoughts to wander to Mount Sardis. They would see in their introverted manner just what had occurred, that Winterburne in the little cottage sitting-room is curiously disappointed and ill at ease.

"Oh, dear!" exclaims Cynthia the next forenoon, "how awfully disappointing you were last evening! We had a reception — we really did, and I hardly knew what to do. Mother was like Dickens's poor convict, 'terribly low,' and *actually* cried over thoughts of Mrs. Jasper. I could

shake Perdita with a good will, the little wretch! I couldn't talk a moment to any one, but there were good-bys and invitations. Mr. Stafford came over with Miss Hilliard—he is persuading her to make an engagement with a Philadelphia firm for illustrating some volumes of poems. And I can't tell you half of what any one said. I think they were really vexed not to find you at home. Mr. Winterburne did not know what to do with himself."

In the afternoon Regina takes her mother out to make a few farewell calls. Miss Nichol and all the world may look at her as she sits in the phaeton, driving her pony, carrying herself with the serene grace and unmoved dignity one associates with the purest birth and highest training. Her plain gown shows the faultless perfection of shoulders and arms, a command over every muscle; her hands are gloved to perfection, her elegant hat displays the great coil of hair, the shell pink of her dainty ears, the luminous whiteness of her complexion. She is unconscious of staring or envious or even curious eyes. Fortunately she meets Miss Hilliard on the hotel balcony, so their few moments together are for public eyes, and admit of no sentiment. She is glad not to run the gantlet of the Nichol end of the cottage porch. But she passes Miss Nichol on the promenade, and at that instant smiles at some comment of her mother's, while the unwonted sweetness of the expression transfigures her with new beauty.

"What a really handsome girl!" Mr. Stafford says to his companion. "I am proud of ever so distant a relationship with her. I have been endeavoring to persuade Miss Hilliard to bring them both to Philadelphia presently. My mother would be delighted to receive them all."

Miss Nichol is too good a manager to throw away her chance here for an instant's petty spite. Self-interest can keep her amiable.

That evening the trunks are packed, and by noon of the next day they are at Bradley House. Mr. Bradley's welcome is effusive. Has he missed his son so much, and is he really glad?

There is a brief note from Jasper, extravagant, incoherent, and no mention is made of their return. A message from Perdita sends love to everybody. Events proceed without any break or mishap. Mrs. Halford is quite certain it would be cruel to go away before Perdita's homecoming. There is considerable discussion as to what they will take, and what in the shape of heirlooms they will leave.

"I have sent for a carpenter to help move that old *escritoire*," announces Mr. Bradley. "I shall have it up in my room, but it must be taken apart. Those things are so cumbersome. My grandfather had that, and no doubt his father before him."

He and Mrs. Halford have a sentimental talk over old furniture, full of reminiscences on his side.

They all watch the process as Mr. Gedicke and Abram make ready to remove it up-stairs. Drawers come out. The bottom, somewhat like a chest of drawers, is unscrewed from the top, a task of patient endeavor and oiling of the screws. Mr. Gedicke pauses to mop his face, and roll his shirt-sleeves a little higher. Then he goes at it with renewed vigor, and awkwardly catches his chisel in a board at the back.

"Have a care! have a care!" cries Mr. Bradley apprehensively.

The board flares outward. There is a soft swish as something slips down. Gedicke gives it a little twist, loosening the lower corner. A large flat paper, dusty and cobweby, tumbles to the floor. It is tied with a bit of tape, and sealed with a blotch of dull wax partly slivered off. The man picks it up, and hands it to Regina, who has been indifferently watching the proceedings. She takes it fastidiously in her fingers, beats off the dust, turns it over, and this meets her eyes.

"The last will and testament of Silas Bradley, Esq."

Regina glances up with a frightened expression, as if she had seen a ghost.

"*Oh, what is it?*" cries Cynthia in alarm at her pallor.

"What is the matter?" exclaims Mr. Bradley testily, coming around as if in vexation.

Regina hands the packet to him without a word.

"The will!" with passionate eagerness. "I always said there was one!" he shouts in a quavering voice. "Give it to me. I had my uncle's promise that I should be his sole heir!"

He clutches it as he drops into a chair completely overcome. The three women glance at each other in vague, unspoken terror, though only Regina instantly realizes what this means for them and Norman Winterburne — the greater loss to him, she thinks.

CHAPTER XVIII

COMING HOME

Nature makes some wise provisions. We might be envious of the happiness of others, if, frequently, we did not despise it. — L. E. L.

It seems at times to Regina Halford as if she must be answerable for the impending change in the family destinies. She shudders even now and can feel the rough, dusty paper between her fingers. That the will has lain there securely hidden all this time, dropped down by some freak of fate even before Silas Bradley's death, it would seem possible.

The Halfords are in their new home, whither they went at once. Mr. Bradley's delight was almost insanity when, on the same evening, Mr. Sayre came up and read the will. He noted everything deliberately: the narrow tape with which it was fastened and attached by a blotch of sealing-wax that was now a dullish brown, brittle and scaled off, the yellowness of the paper and its dry texture, before he examined the contents. In a roundish school-boy hand the body of the will was written—it was Silas Bradley's earlier writing, no doubt. Of late years the letters had sharpened a little and were irregular, but quite remarkable for a man past ninety. Across the top was the same superscription as on the outside, then followed:

“IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN.

“I, Silas Bradley, being of sound mind and body, do hereby, etc,” through all the quaint, legal verbiage, “bequeath to my nephew Morton Bradley, the only son of my brother Morton deceased, all such property as I may die possessed of, to wit, one hundred and seventy acres of *land and house known as Bradley House in the town of*

Beverly, and any I may acquire hereafter, all personal property;" and then followed an enumeration of bonds, stocks and mortgages, furniture, and so on.

Mr. Sayre read it carefully over to himself, then to his audience. Morton Bradley sat in an arm-chair, his face shaded by his long, white hand, that looked whiter than ever, and gave a series of affirmative sounds indicating great satisfaction. Then Mr. Sayre examined the date, which was twenty-two years before. It was attested by Lawyer David Paulin and signed by two witnesses, both old men and both dead.

"Of course this must be thoroughly investigated and the signatures compared, identified," says Mr. Sayre slowly. "With your permission, I will take this with me and keep it in my safe until to-morrow" —

Mr. Bradley partially rises, stretches out his hand.

"It must be offered for probate — it must be proved an authentic document," the lawyer says sharply. "The ink of all the signatures is, I think, a little different from the main body of the will; but that would not impair it, of course. We must have daylight for it. When is your son expected home, Mr. Bradley?"

"I — I do not know" — hesitatingly.

"I think you had better send for him," says the lawyer dryly, as he studies the half-invalid man whose mind certainly has not been in a healthy state. One could hardly suspect *him* of trickery. But Mr. Sayre cannot help some vague suspicion — perhaps it is because he hates to have so great a change in affairs, and because he has come to like Jasper Bradley the least of any of the heirs. He knows at once if this is established, the others must give up everything, but he does not suggest it now. Cynthia studies him out of her long, slow moving eyes. Regina is deadly pale. If only she had not been there at the discovery! If she were not so curiously meshed about by the other destinies!

Mr. Sayre and Mr. Upham go over it very thoroughly the next morning. It looks authentic enough, and every-
dy had expected Morton Bradley to be the heir.

"The part of it that seems most singular to me is this," says Mr. Upham in a cautious tone of voice. "For twenty or so years there was no communication between these two men. Not a letter from his nephew has been found among Silas Bradley's effects, bearing any recent date. One would imagine during that time he would want to make some other disposition of his wealth in case his nephew should not be living. And if he expected his nephew to come in and take possession, I should suppose he would have had the will among his other papers."

"I hunted that old escritoire through and through. I even took up what I fancied was a false bottom. How the thing could have slipped away when there wasn't a crevice, puzzles me. It has all the marks of age, and the tape around it was so tender that it dropped to bits. David Paulin's signature can be readily identified. There is Ezra McClaymont—he was an old friend—older than Silas Bradley, I am quite sure. Part of the woodland up back of the hill was purchased from him, as I found by the deed. And Joshua Lane"—

"Lane died over twenty years ago," Mr. Upham declares. "I remember settling the estate. Now it *is* curious that Mr. Bradley did not make another will when the lawyer and both witnesses were dead. He always struck me as being a sensible, reasonable sort of an old man. And he couldn't be really certain he would outlive his sister. Since she made no will, her part, whatever it was, would go to all the heirs, naturally."

"If she had any separate part."

"I must get several of Lane's signatures and some of McClaymont's and compare them. And I must go down to Warwick. This will hit that young Winterburne hard. I'm up and down sorry for him."

Mr. Sayre is deeply interested, and spends his day getting together various bits and scraps of information. He misses Winterburne, who has gone to a distant town to conclude the bargain for a large order.

At Bradley House there is an unreal sort of atmosphere,

as if they had all been stunned. Mr. Bradley shows an unexpected anxiety for their departure. No one has any right in the place, never has had, he declares in an authoritative manner. Regina hastens the packing; they will take none of the articles that have been set aside for them. And have not the rest been purchased with the Bradley money?

On the morning of the second day after the cataclysm they take their household belongings, Dolly and the phaeton, and, with a brief, indifferent farewell, wind slowly down the well-kept drive. Mrs. Hardin comes to her garden gate to exchange a few words with Cynthia.

"I'm awful sorry," she says sympathetically. "That old man's half crazy, and there's no sense in his having all the money. Lucky that your sister married the young man: there'll be some of it in the family."

"I really wouldn't believe," Mrs. Halford comments, as she and Regina drive along the beautiful ways, "I really wouldn't believe Cousin Bradley could be so selfish and — mean, that is just the word. He fairly gloats over the discovery, and is so confident, so arrogant! I always considered him a gentleman, but he has behaved shamefully. Do you suppose they will take back everything, Regina?"

"If they have the right," she says with bitter emphasis. She remembers the apothegm that great poverty and great wealth bring to the surface heroic virtues and contemptible weaknesses. Morton Bradley has displayed a great deal of the latter during the forty-eight hours. Surely some unseen power must have directed her in this step, yet she feels so strange and confused that she can hardly define any guiding sensation. It is being utterly at sea.

"Mr. Winterburne will stand up for his rights," says the elder lady with intense satisfaction.

"If the will is proved, no one else has any rights."

"I don't think it *ought* to be proved. I don't believe Uncle Silas meant it to stand. He wouldn't have hidden it away in that old escritoire. And to be hurried out of *the house* in that indecent fashion! I couldn't have done *it if I'd had millions.*"

Regina and Cynthia bestir themselves, and by night the new home takes on a certain friendly aspect. It has a sense of neighborliness. The street is wide, and the houses opposite cheerful looking, especially when the lamps are lighted. One of their neighbors they have known quite well, and both have proffered kindly services. There is a pleasant stir of people going to and fro, and already they have had some tender sympathy from friends who all agree that the thing is unprecedented, and that some flaw will be found to restore matters to their proper equilibrium. The excitement has not been a bad thing, and their indignation at Mr. Bradley's cavalier treatment has bridged over what might have been a sentiment of regret at leaving Bradley House.

There have been property difficulties and will contests at Beverly, as in all county towns, but it is the more exciting as all parties have been objects of interest from the first, and as the previous disposition of the estate has appeared equitable. Mr. Sayre has written to the son of old Squire Paulin, and visited the existing branches of the Lane families, questioning them closely as to whether they ever heard any mention of the will. None of them can recall a single fact.

Winterburne comes up to Beverly at once on his return. He questions Mr. Sayre with lawyer-like acuteness, and takes in every fact with a resolute look in his eyes that indicates a disposition not to submit tamely.

"After all," he says, "it is not so much the effect it can have upon me, though that will be bad enough at this juncture, as the future of Mrs. Halford and her daughters. If one could help them out!"

"Mrs. Halford has a little money very judiciously invested. They are not extravagant. I am thankful they had decided upon this change, for I regret to say that Mr. Bradley's behavior has been anything but friendly. He was very much incensed at the beginning, and wanted to contest the whole thing in a high-handed way, claiming *that he had been defrauded*. I confess to a certain admira-

tion for the young man through it all. He has, I am sure, some secret power over his father, and he used it kindly, judiciously, and restored him to a more equable frame of mind. But I can't help feeling that the money will soon slip through the young man's fingers. He is very improvident."

"Fight it as far as you can," advises Winterburne. "It will make me a good deal of trouble, but it will not exactly be ruin;" and a light in his face seems to promise a smile, yet hardly dawns.

"You are lucky in your new mine. I heard it lay mostly on the Finter ground."

"Yes, fortunately. There's enough iron to last half a lifetime, excellent quality too. Are the Halfords at all settled?" suddenly veering round.

"They are very comfortable. Mrs. Halford is a good deal shaken up, and really hurt by Mr. Bradley's behavior. I'm afraid there will be a difference between them and young Mrs. Bradley. I sincerely wish she had not married Jasper."

"Do the best you can for all of us. You need not spare any money."

Mr. Sayre glances up into the fine, honest face. Why could not this young man have stood in Jasper Bradley's place! Still he will make his way, and there may be finer blood on *his* father's side.

They shake hands in a friendly fashion as they part.

Winterburne strolls across the park. The merry squirrels are chasing each other up and down the trees and glance at him fearlessly out of shrewd, almost laughing eyes. The swallows are making darting flights. There is such a different fragrance in the air from that early sweetness he remembers the May-day when the grass was newly out, and apple blooms raining pink and white showers. He goes down a street, scanning the houses. Yes. Here it is. He cannot forego the delight of seeing them, even if the talk must be mostly of the misfortune.

Cynthia opens the door for him.

"Oh!" with a glad little cry. "How good of you to come! Mother will be delighted. You are the brother that — my quotation begins at the wrong end. But we are all so tumbled up and down."

"That may be useful in adversity. Let us make adages to suit ourselves;" and he smiles brightly. That one little word brother has set all his pulses aflame. Of course he was confident all along, he tells himself, that Regina never could have cared for Jasper Bradley.

Mrs. Halford comes to meet him with a touching gladness. She has a somewhat strained and anxious look, and is much paler.

"You have seen Mr. Sayre? What are we all going to do? I begin to wish we had never heard about the money. Only there has been a delightful year and a half. But if we have to pay it all back" —

"We are going to do our very best. I have a feeling that there is fraud at the bottom, and that is Mr. Sayre's opinion. But the paper on which the will is written is precisely the same as that old Mr. Paulin had used for other wills; the writing is Silas Bradley's beyond a doubt. The question will hinge on the signatures. The queer thing is, as Mr. Sayre says, that the will should have been kept so many years after the witnesses were dead. And a most excellent fact is that a cousin of Mr. Upham's was appointed executor. He is an old man, but will qualify to keep it altogether out of the hands of the Bradleys."

"I wouldn't have believed Cousin Bradley could be so unkind," moans Mrs. Halford. "And poor Perdita! If she had not married in such haste!"

"But you see," says Cynthia, "she will be the fortunate one after all."

Mrs. Halford shakes her head sorrowfully.

"She is such a child. We ought to have thought — we ought to have been more careful."

"I *did* think once," replies Cynthia. "I believe it was Miss Hilliard who put the idea into my head. And I set out to *play gooseberry* and made her very angry. After

that Regina and I considered the point, but of course we never dreamed of anything being done in such a hurry. Jasper was really insolent that day, as if he had triumphed over us all. And we had liked him so much. Perhaps it was the sense of relationship, and yet I do think he was extremely charming at times. But what we are all to do" —

"You are just to wait," he says in a man's dominant fashion, and Cynthia, glancing up at him, smiles with a pervading thrill of security. "There is precisely the same relationship between us," he continues. "And — will you think me foolish if I confess that I have almost had some touches of jealousy when I thought how much nearer he was to you than I?" and Winterburne colors like a girl under the naïve confession.

"But we knew you first," replies Mrs. Halford. "And you put courage into one" — She smiles trustfully up into his face. "What a pity Regina is not at home! But we thank you so much for coming. You must not think we cared more for Jasper" — Then she pauses confused, wondering what this new relation will bring about.

"When you want a friend, you may be sure of one close at hand. You must rely upon me as you would upon a son;" yes, he will have the delight of saying it.

He lingers for some time, but Regina does not come in. If he could but see her! She is being made much of and sympathized with in Mrs. Sayre's delicate fashion that does not wound her super-sensitive soul with bald pity. If they must be poor again, let them take up their burden proudly. They did not scheme nor strive for the wealth.

Winterburne goes his way not a little disappointed. They will all be banded together for the common purpose of proving their rights — is he *quite* sure? It is for the sake of the Halfords chiefly that he wants to win. He can recover himself in a year or two, although just now it will interfere somewhat with his plans for Warwick. Well, if he has less money, he must work the harder, give more freely of himself, and is not that the truest kindness to one's fellow-creatures? Have not men natural obligations

to each other? For if one cannot establish the broad theory of the brotherhood of humanity, then indeed the high truths uttered more than eighteen hundred years ago are as nothing. Norman Winterburne is not quite ready to see them swept away for unfaiths. And yet the other picture, the passionate longing springs up by its side, the beautiful girl whom the very airs of heaven must not visit too roughly. He can see the kind of home in which she must unfold and blossom royally. It is not Bradley House with its flavor of antiquity, though that is not in itself to be despised. It is the wider sphere of a serene and magnificent womanhood, — the surroundings that wealth only can give. And if these misfortunes should bring her nearer, he will strive to place her there.

It occurs to him that he will be, that he is indeed, living in some sort a double life. This for her sake — he is so utterly honest, so used to being frank with himself even in his communings that he makes it purposely vague, clothes it in the roseate twilight hues that are just translucent enough to enable him to picture what is beyond without actually outlining it — will it not make a sharp dividing line? Can a man serve two masters? Ah, well, there is in love some divine power of equalization, there must be.

"Mr. Winterburne has been here," exclaims Cynthia the moment Regina enters; "and he has comforted mother so much! There is something inspiriting in his very tone — don't you think so? And he isn't cast down" —

"I do not see why he should be," Regina answers with a curious internal irritation. "His mine is one of the wonders even in this belt of iron lands. Mr. Sayre thinks he could realize a fortune by selling it out at once; and he has had applications for the right to use his process elsewhere. It is only us, we three women, whose lot will be materially changed, for Perdita" —

"It is curious they do not return," interrupts Cynthia. "I know just what Perdita will do. She will persuade Jasper to let matters remain mostly as they are: she is a generous little soul."

"She will have nothing at all to say; and — I would not, could not, live on Jasper Bradley's money!" she declares passionately.

"I thought you liked Jasper. Regina, you are the most unaccountable person I ever saw;" and Cynthia sighs.

Meanwhile the lawyers are busy, trying to get at any fact that can throw a ray of light on the subject; yet it seems only remarkable. No wisdom can argue it into absolute criminality. It has no certain marks of forgery, though it is examined with glasses and by various experts. The signatures are in a paler ink that shows yellowish traces; the will must have been written out at one time and signed at another. The large wafer, put on as a seal, betrays evident indications of age.

One evening, just as the shadows are falling, a hack winds up the road, and two people alight. There is a rather chilly feeling in the air; the wind sighs through the great trees, and the porch is deserted. Perdita Bradley shivers as they cross it, her husband's arm around her. She has been so eagerly, childishly happy all these days, that this is an unlooked-for, dismal ending. There are no lights, save a dim one in Mr. Bradley's room up-stairs.

"Oh, do you suppose they have gone?" cries Perdita in sudden affright.

"They have acted on their own pleasure," he returns ironically. "They might have remained to welcome us home, but since they did not see fit — Perhaps the stately Regina did not care to witness your delight, my darling."

He has been a rapturous lover this fortnight, and Perdita is bewildered by her happiness. With a young girl's easily roused vanity she has come to believe that Regina stood ready to snatch at her good-fortune. Jasper has not said it in so many words, but implied it with delicate assurance. Still, all the old affection rushes back to her, and she does feel lonely without them.

Mrs. Crouse admits them, greatly amazed.

"You never sent a bit of word, or things would a' been

better," she begins somewhat resentfully. She cannot imagine a bride coming home in this manner.

"They will all be right enough presently," declares Jasper in his airy fashion. "Get us something to eat and a cup of tea. Make up a fire. Ugh! the house is chilly. It will be a dismal place in winter. How you all endured it"—and he glances at Perdita. "Where is my father?" with a sudden anxiety.

"He must be asleep, I think; he had his supper a good hour ago. There's been a great time—have you heard?"—

The woman looks at him with an uncertain air.

"I have not heard a word—how could we? We were seldom twenty-four hours in the same place. Has he been ill? You know I told you to send for a physician at once. And those people all away," nodding toward the hall, and evincing traces of excitement.

"Then there's lots of news. And a will's been found."

"A will?" cries Jasper. "Where, pray, could a will come from?" Then he laughs incredulously. "Mrs. Crouse, you must be out of your mind: solitude has made you mad."

"A will?" Perdita has taken off her hat with its multitude of waving plumes, but her wrap is still around her. Her small face seems to rise out of it, ghost-like, and her brown eyes have terrified lights in them. "A will?" She catches the housekeeper's arm and turns her about, for that person is a little sulky at the doubtful manner in which tidings that have been the talk of the town are received. "Where was it? What was it?" and her voice trembles with excitement.

"Perdita!" Jasper's arms are about her, turning her so that her face drops on his shoulder, and he holds her too tight for any escape.

"Yes, where was it, Mrs. Crouse?" he asks jauntily. "I thought every rafter of the old house, every crook and cranny, had been searched."

"It was in that scrittur thing. I don't see any sense of *such outlandish* names, when you could call it a closet,

or a wardrobe with a chest of drawers, or a book-case. They were going to move it up into your father's room. Mr. Gedicke was here taking it apart, and the will fell out — so old 'twould hardly hold together."

"Well, what was in it?" still incredulously.

"Why, your father takes everything. They're saying in the town it isn't right, and the t'other young man," making a gesture with her head, "is working all his might and main to upset it. I don't see why the old thing had to come to light; you were all well enough off, and now you'd have half, anyway."

"Oh, yes, Jasper;" Perdita cries in a smothered tone. "Let everything be as it was before. And maybe there's something wrong about it."

"That is for the lawyers to determine. My father has always insisted that he was sole heir. And it is not *my* province to decide anything."

Perdita shivers with certainty of evil.

"How cold you are!" he says. "Come, Mrs. Crouse, give us a fire at once and a cup of tea. This midget of mine is half frozen."

He kisses some warmth back to her cold little face. It was so that morning, she remembers. All this time she has had a wretched secret buried in his extravagant tenderness, and now it has suddenly waked, a very ghost, and stares at her. Oh, what shall she do! These two weeks have been so full of gayety that she has had no time to think. He has swallowed her up, as it were, by a kind of overpowering influence. But she owes so much to her aunt and cousins — can she see them wronged?

He hovers about caressingly, puts her into the great arm-chair, and draws her to the fire that Mrs. Crouse is evolving out of dry brushwood and dead cedar branches. It blazes, crackles, sends up a shower of bright sparks, and she loses a little of the haunted feeling.

"Now, midget, get good and warm while I run up-stairs and look at the father a moment."

When the door closes Perdita starts from her chair.

"Mrs. Crouse," she cries sharply, "come here and tell me just how the will was found."

"Yes; I'll set the kettle over. There's cold chicken and nice fresh bread" —

"I don't want anything to eat. Tell me! tell me!" imperatively.

Thus adjured, Mrs. Crouse goes through the startling incidents in a brief space of time. She is a plain woman, and her education has not been of the kind to give her a command of words. It seems a very little thing. Perdita can see the will tumble out, she can guess at Regina's amazement, and the unexpected certainty when Mr. Sayre comes and reads the document.

"And does it really give everything to Mr. Bradley?" she asks with colorless lips that can hardly frame the words. "Will my aunt have nothing?"

"Well, maybe they can upset it. Anyhow, you will have enough, and you can do the right thing by them if the law — well, I don't know much about law in such cases. But you look curious — frightened like."

There is a step and the door opens. Mrs. Crouse is kneeling down, poking the fire.

"Father is asleep. Now, Mrs. Crouse, for some supper. I've hurried this poor little girl about seeing everything, as if there would never be a chance again in our lives, and she's dead tired."

He sits down beside Perdita and takes her hand caressingly.

"I wish you would let me go to — to mother's. She's been my mother so long, and I want to see them all. It is so lonesome here without them," Perdita cries piteously.

"You foolish, little girl! Why, I am your husband, and you have been ready to go all over the world with me. You will feel better in the morning sunshine. We'll get out of this dismal old hole! It would kill me to spend a winter here. We'll go to some of the cities and have a gay time with theatres, and operas, and dainty suppers, and *lots of people*. How good Mrs. Crouse's tea smells! Come. *Have a little supper and go to bed.*"

He leads her to the table without any comment on her pale face and strangely beseeching eyes. He has been the impelling spirit for the last two weeks, and she has been delighted to obey. She has loved him with a girl's unreasoning passion; she has been torn with jealousy in the past, and, stung by apparent indifference on his part, delighted beyond measure to know that it was only seeming. She has been loved with a wild, ardent, tumultuous passion that has swept her off her feet and given her no time for reflection; in fact, hers is not a nature for reflection. She has been all joyous, eager life, and now she seems crushed, thrown aside as she has seen some poor flower on a weed heap. She has done something or left it undone, and she cannot see her way clear to retrace her steps, even if she were not suddenly afraid of her master. She sips a little tea: she cannot swallow anything without an effort.

"I am not hungry," she says with a faint movement of the face as if she would smile. If she only dared ask him about the will she saw lying on the table! To-morrow, perhaps —

He picks over the cold chicken delicately, praises the bread, and refers to some of the amusing events of their journey. If he evinced more curiosity about the will, it would not seem so unnatural; but this taking it as a matter of course gives her an awful certainty that he is not surprised.

"Now you must go straight to bed," he begins gayly. "You must have a glass of wine. Why have I not thought of that before?" He takes the pretty crystal jug from the sideboard and pours her out a tiny portion, putting a little water with it, and then with his arm about her, leads her up-stairs.

"I am going to sit here and read you asleep," he says with a touch of solicitude. "I can't have my midget frightened in this dismal old place. I never thought it was so horrid before. To-morrow, if you like, we will go to the hotel."

"Jasper!" Her eyes are fixed on his, and one long

breath seems to shudder up from her very feet. "Jasper — I must ask you, tell you" —

"Not a word to-night. You shall ask me, tell me anything to-morrow. You are tired to death."

Is she glad of the respite?

He opens the novel that has amused her so much, earlier in the day, but its pretty turns and bright talk irritate her now. Jasper's voice is smooth and soft, and lulls the restless nerves of youth. When he hears the long, regular breaths he stops, listens intently a while and lays down his book.

With a consciousness that he has made a great blunder, he strangles the oath that rises to his lips, and goes out softly.

CHAPTER XIX

A NIGHT'S WORK

Things without all remedy
Should be without regard; what's done is done. — *Macbeth*.

PERDITA starts suddenly out of her sleep. There is a light burning dimly and the place is strange. She springs up in bed and in a moment remembers, restored a little by the voices she hears in the adjoining room: one rather high and shrill, the other soft, soothing. She slips on a dressing-gown and stands uncertain, then tries the door very softly. That is locked, and it rouses her to anger. But the other one opens into the study, and from thence to the hall. The long, dark passage and the stairway at the end fill her with wild alarm. She opens the farther door and sees the two men sitting at the table.

"Perdita!" Jasper cries, while his father's face turns ghastly.

She walks straight to the table, unheeding her husband's commanding gesture. Some spell seems to sway her.

"I could not sleep. I came to tell you — I saw the will here on this table. But I remember now that it was not signed. And if any one signed it and hid it away" —

Morton Bradley clutches his son's arm and stares at Perdita until his jaw falls and he is a picture of pitiable terror. Jasper supports him lest he shall drop to the floor.

"Perdita!" he cries angrily, "you will kill him! How dare you! When did *you* see a will here?"

"O Jasper! that morning, don't you remember? The morning you came down from the tower and asked me — said" —

Jasper rises and lays his father on the sofa.

"I think you have killed him! Now let us hear about this will." He comes close to her with blazing eyes. Why did he not defy her before? "Quick!" he cries. "I must attend to him."

"It was here." She taps the table. "It has just come to me. And if any one signed it, it will be false, a — a forgery!"

"There was no will here. Perdita, you are dreaming, crazy! Why, you would have been surprised *then*, you wouldn't have waited all this time. Go back to bed. It is simply a horrid dream."

Then he flies to his father and chafes his hands, rubs the temples. There is a gasp of returning consciousness.

"Go, quick!" He stamps his foot, but Perdita stands as if turned to stone.

"You see, it was quite impossible. You were here, looking for me, I suppose," with a touch of scorn. "Then I came — delighted to see you, and asked you — why, you couldn't have been such a hypocrite, if you suspected anything wrong, as to marry me."

His father makes a slight movement. He turns the key in the locked door, catches Perdita in his arms, and bears her back to the bed. She clings to him hysterically, and begins to cry.

"Jasper," she pleads, "let it all be as it was. The will is wrong, I know. It is cruel to take the fortune from Aunt Halford and the girls: they were so good to me. And we will have enough without that. I've wanted to tell you so many times, only — I never supposed — why, *you* couldn't do such a thing, Jasper; and if he did" —

Jasper has been considering. This is like an effective bit out of a play and appeals to his melodramatic sense. He would never suspect Perdita of so much method or so much courage. At times she has seemed impelled to be curiously confidential, but she has been so easily put off that he has fancied her very manageable through her blind love for him. He has never felt quite certain how far her *knowledge went*.

"I couldn't," he says; "you are right enough there. And a feeble old man with a shaky hand — why, Perdita, it is monstrous! You have dreamed this! I should not have left you alone, but I had not seen him, and when I heard him stirring I went to have a little talk, and you woke with this horrid thing in your mind. It came from the talk down-stairs and your being tired out and in a strange place. For I could swear there was nothing but what all the world might see on that table the day you came here. If you thought any one was going to be wronged, it was your place to make it known as soon as possible. Poor little girl, you are frightened and hysterical!"

Perdita sobs for a while, but at every effort to unclasp her hands she clings tighter. At length he does it by main force, and glances back to the room he has left so lately. His father is not there.

"My father!" he cries. "Perdita, you *must* calm yourself while I go and find him. How could you be so foolish as to raise such a rumpus at the dead of night!"

The old man has taken the candle. Jasper seizes the lamp and follows. He is not in the room where he expected to find him, but he sees a faint glimmer up the stairway. He is wandering about, candle in hand, among the rubbish.

"I was looking for that will," he says querulously. "They have hidden it somewhere. Those wretched old people who will not die and let me have my fling at their savings and scrapings. I put it somewhere that day — let me see" —

"Come, the will is all right, in the lawyer's hands. You must not be poking about in this chilly air." The candle was burning down in the socket and he blew it out, then took his father by the arm. "Come," with persuasive tenderness, "you will find it all right to-morrow."

Morton Bradley suffered himself to be led down-stairs. In the hall he paused and looked at his son, was again assured, and went on to his own room. Jasper heard *Perdita sobbing*, and curled his perfect lips in scorn.

"I was a fool to marry her," he says under his breath. "Yet I suppose the story would have carried weight, and now it simply cannot. She is a unique little thing, and will serve for amusement unless there is war between the two! I had not imagined such a thing possible. Well, we will go away from here; we must whether he likes it or not."

All this time he is assisting his father to prepare for bed. The old man glances furtively about as if searching for some one, but makes no reference to Perdita.

"I must have another pill, Jasper, just one. I am tired and queer here," putting his hand to his forehead. "I feel as if something had happened to me,"—in a wandering tone of voice. "You are quite sure the will is safe?"

"Yes, yes, as you will see to-morrow."

"I thought some one said—it was not signed. Some one came in—I can't remember," piteously.

"It is signed. It is all right. Take your pill, and go to sleep at once." Jasper rolls one out in his hand. Another would extinguish life he thinks carelessly. And what are some lives but the mere habit of living? He smiles, and puts the bottle back in his pocket; then locks the door, so there can be no further nocturnal rambling.

"He will forget all about it by morning," the son says softly.

Perdita is still crying in wretched loneliness, with sharp spasms of fear. Everything is so strange. Jasper comes and soothes her, caresses the soft hair tumbled about her cold forehead, kisses down the eyelids, and begs her to go to sleep. He has had much experience in the art of persuasion. He is really fond of Perdita too, as one would be of a pretty kitten, and fondness often wins where harshness fails. His nature has not the strength to be persistently cruel. There are only two of his relatives he has come to hate. For Winterburne he has a grudging passion that would delight in ruining his whole life; but the man is so far out of his reach he will hardly feel the little blow *he deals him*. The other is Regina.

She has brought back to him some of the possibilities for which he imagined he longed when his lot was cast in such a different sphere. He fancies still that he could attain to it with a fortune and a wife like Regina; but he would fail utterly in any strain of ambition, he is too serenely indolent. He knows that at first he impressed her strongly, but he has a dim suspicion that she has seen through his artificial polish, his pretence; and to be understood, to have any one probe down to the vital truth, is what he cannot endure. But he blames her for not being ready to stretch out her fair white hand for his salvation, without even deciding that he wants to be saved. It is because Winterburne has gained some power over her. He has this much appreciation of her giant pride, that being poor she will not marry Winterburne. His taunts have settled that. He would like to know that she suffered, that she was doomed to wander among ruined ideals and never reach the happiness she could enjoy. Poverty will be a bitter portion to her.

Perdita falls asleep. He leans his head down on the pillow, quite exhausted with the trials of the night. He seems to carry on his thoughts, indeed, would have said he had never lost the connection, but a great rapping on the door, that he appears to have vaguely listened to a long while, finally rouses him.

"Oh, what is it?" cries Perdita in affright. "Jasper! Jasper!" and again she clings to him in frantic alarm.

It is at the door. There is a smell of something—

"Quick," cries Mrs. Crouse. "The house is on fire! Merciful heavens! however did it catch over in that stairway? Come down at once before escape is cut off."

Perdita is screaming with affright.

"Dress her," cries Jasper to Mrs. Crouse. "Put on anything, and carry her down. I must look after my father."

There is an ominous roar on the other side of the partition. The back stairway is safe, and thither the small procession wends. Abram is on the rear porch asking a dozen questions in one breath. What shall he do? What

can be done? Mr. Bradley is awake now, and his terror is maddening. There are a few things Jasper wants to save. "Keep him, hold him," he cries, and plunges back. The flames have burst through. Jasper seizes some valuables and a box of papers and flings them out of the front window. The flames have cut off his retreat, so he lets himself down over the porch, and runs around just in time to see his father break away from the man and disappear in the burning house again. He leaps up the stairs, now full of smoke, gropes around calling his father, and finds him in a heap on the landing.

"The will!" Morton Bradley moans feebly. "I want the will. It is not signed."

Jasper bears him down again. The chill September morning has sent a streak of pale, watery yellow down low in the eastern sky, and all the rest is purple-blue save where the tall tree-tops seem to shadow it with blackness. There are no stars left. The flame begins to creep through the roof and shoots out lurid rays. The grass is drenched with dew, the very paths are dank.

"Get out the wagon at once, and take us all down to Hardin's," says Jasper when he can collect his senses. He chafes his father's cold hands, wraps his own coat around him. It seems an age before the man returns, and then the frightened horse is almost unmanageable.

"Lead him down a short distance. Perdita!"

Perdita is sheltered in Mrs. Crouse's lap, crying and laughing in an hysterical manner.

"Come," Jasper commands, and takes his father in his arms, staggering under the burden which he soon finds is a dead weight.

"But — oughtn't something be done to save it?" asks Abram, glancing back at the house.

"It will have to go," Jasper laughs bitterly. Is this the end of Bradley House!

For a few moments the confusion at the Hardins' is quite indescribable. It is not light enough yet to see clearly. *Mrs. Hardin lights a lamp and stirs the fire.*

"Get some blankets, something warm," Jasper cries in a startled tone. He pulls a small flask of brandy out of his pocket and forces some through his father's lips, but it is not swallowed. "He has fainted," he says a moment later.


When they have done their utmost and can find no pulse, no heart-beat, Abram is despatched for the doctor. But Jasper Bradley has a presentiment that no physician's skill can fan back the spark of life. There is a great sigh — is it relief? He has kept his promise to his dying mother, who loved this man so passionately, who had saved him more than once from the consequences of deeds absolutely criminal; who had provided luxuries for his delicate tastes and habits when he was too indolent or too improvident to provide even daily bread. It seems a kind of travesty to him. This man with his steady-going, thrifty ancestry back of him which should have evolved a continuation of worthy traits, and the pretty stage dancer, for there had been a time when she was handsome, slim, and graceful, and coined money with her twinkling feet. Stately Regina's theories would be sadly at fault. Jasper wonders how he ever dared to aspire to her supreme favor.

With broad daylight that end of the town is astir. Two engines go up to Bradley House, but they are too late to be of much service. The doctor's verdict is as Jasper has foreseen. Perdita has had a chill, and now a fever begins to follow. She is wide-eyed and almost out of her senses with terror.

"Hadn't she better be taken to Mrs. Halford's?" suggests Mrs. Hardin. "They're about settled by this time. Well, if their movin' wasn't directed by the hand of Providence, I'll give up."

Jasper holds a consultation with Mrs. Crouse.

"I'll take her at once to a hotel, and you must nurse her," he says. "She had a fright last night with father; he was a little out of his mind. Then she had a horrid dream about the will, and she will likely be delirious. I can trust you to take good care of her."

 Mrs. Crouse assents to this arrangement, and Jasper

Bradley loses no time in bringing it about. There is a profound sympathy for him in this overwhelming tide of misfortunes.

Cynthia Halford, going out to take her morning constitutional, returns hurriedly with the news.

"My poor Perdita!" exclaims Mrs. Halford. "Some of us must go to her at once;" and she glances inquiringly at Regina.

"There will be so much excitement," Regina answers in a quiet, kindly manner, for she knows how tender her mother's heart is towards Perdita. She cannot get over a feeling of their being unhandsomely treated all through. Perdita has sent them only one brief note. "Perhaps," she adds, with a certain air that resembles expectation, "we may have some word presently."

They wait all the morning, and though neighbors come in with different versions of the story, no message arrives. At mid-afternoon Cynthia and her mother drive up to inspect the ruins. The old stone walls still stand erect. There are some blackened and smoking timbers, a pile of ruins, the grass trampled, the shrubbery broken, and the pretty flower-garden destroyed. There is quite a throng of spectators; a fire is a rare occurrence in Beverly. And that this house should come to an end in such a manner appears incredible, even with the fact before their faces.

Mrs. Hardin's front porch and windows show quite a concourse of people, so they drive quietly down and halt at the Dilsey House. Cynthia alights and is gone a few moments.

"Mrs. Crouse is here with her," she says, springing back into the phaeton, to her mother's surprise. "Perdita is asleep now, for the first time to-day. Her fever has run high. Of course no one can see her. Jasper was not in, for which I am unfeignedly sorry."

"It is very strange. It is positively unkind." And Mrs. Halford wipes away a tear under the protection of her veil.

The next morning a brief note comes from Jasper. *Perdita, by the doctor's orders, is to see no one at present, and*

have no excitement. Her fever is not so severe, but she is a little wandering in her mind. His father is to be buried on the following day, and he expresses a hope that they will attend the services which will be at the church.

"I think we may be quite sure that any pretence of friendship is at an end," Regina says when the note has been read. "I do suppose Perdita's duty is to her husband, and her love leads her that way as well. We must not interfere, nor try to stir up discomfort. And if the verdict is in Jasper's favor" —

"It doesn't seem to me that he *can* take all," cries Cynthia. "Mr. Bradley was queer, and he had a feeling that it all belonged to him; but Jasper" —

"We do not want one penny of Jasper Bradley's fortune," says Regina proudly.

The funeral is largely attended, for the tragic events have moved everybody. Jasper is alone. The Halfords, being the family, are escorted to the seat directly back of him. The young man is pale and heavy-eyed, grave and impressive with his bowed head, and inspires a most heart-felt sympathy.

As they go out in the slow procession, Winterburne is waiting for them and takes Mrs. Halford's arm, leading her to the coach. He is inexpressibly shocked.

"It is not quite two years since the old people went," Mrs. Halford remarks with the gravity the mention of death invariably inspires. "And this—so soon!"

"Mr. Bradley was very delicate when they came," Cynthia says with vague uneasiness. "He has been in the house alone for a full week, enough to make him susceptible to any shock. Finding the will really unhinged him. He always appeared like quite an old man."

"And bright little Perdita is ill! I hope it will not be serious. I am so thankful you were not there," Winterburne says fervently.

Regina shudders.

"I was in Mr. Sayre's office a few moments as I came up. Nothing new has transpired. We must wait now for

Jasper Bradley to show his hand. I do not think *we* have fraternized very cordially, and yet I am truly sorry this has occurred."

"As we all must be," subjoins Cynthia.

Another Bradley is laid away in the family plot. All his mysteries are buried with him. No one now will ever know the story of his wrong doings, his careless indifference to those who loved him and who would have surrounded him with every good if he had but made the slightest return. Not even Jasper is fully aware of the particulars of that last visit, except that he would not agree to the terms required and come home with his wife and child.

They all speak in a friendly manner after the interment. "Mrs. Bradley," Jasper utters it very pointedly, "is quite seriously ill. Fright, some cold, and a severe nervous shock; and the physician has insisted upon the most rigorous quiet," he announces in a tone of concern and the winning expression that seems to admit his regret at not asking them to come and sit by her bedside. His artificiality is visible to them all. Winterburne is the least surprised. He is conscious that from the first he distrusted him, and now he has not the slightest faith in him. He would like to consider him outside of the family. Perhaps there is no Bradley blood in his veins.

Mrs. Halford is a good deal confused. Her indiscriminating charity covers faults and renders virtues more apparent. But even her unreflecting mind is sorely disturbed. She cannot endure that any one whom she has liked should turn out ill, or even disagreeable. And he is her dear Perdita's husband, whose mother's marriage, promising much, turned out most unfortunate. For years she has been haunted with a thought that her father might still be alive and claim her. Perdita's small fortune has been placed unreservedly in Mrs. Halford's hands, with the most specific instructions that the principal is not to be paid over to her or to any one until Perdita reaches legal age. So they cannot quite lose sight of her.

Cynthia is outspoken in her disappointment. She has made no high hero of Jasper Bradley; indeed, in her secret soul she has at times smiled at Regina's strenuous efforts to keep him up in all the exalted methods of modern unrestful thought, which, though he has taken with a certain show of interest, he has not really meant to follow. The apparent love for his father, his gentle kindliness, his readiness to be entertained in what interested another person to the point of self-sacrifice, it has seemed to her, she has been mentally balancing against graver faults, much in his favor indeed.

But Jasper Bradley is merely a clever actor. All of life is a stage to him. When he saw so much of it in his early youth, he despised it. Still, he had never the real strength that takes a human soul out of a distasteful place. All his æstheticism had direct reference to himself. He liked neatness and order and refinement because he was more comfortable in such an atmosphere. He understood intuitively how to pose. He wanted the best things out of life, the ease and luxury and admiration. He had, too, an overweening desire to ally himself with people in a higher social station, the degree to which he was born, and had been crowded out of he believed. He had a dislike for unwholesome vices; he would never have made a heavy villain. Through the earlier years his father had been a tolerably successful gambler, but later, misfortune had dogged his footsteps. When his mother had lost her sylph-like figure, and coarsened in feature, she had fallen to second and third rate positions. He had played in orchestras, and might have done better had he not so hated the associations. After her death he and his father had wandered about Europe for a while, the elder man missing his stay and support, and the love that had ministered to him with such passionate fondness. He had flown to opium for solace, and his health was so shattered that Jasper felt the frail life must end shortly. He would obey his dying mother's behest and afterward follow his own wayward fancies.

But the unexpected fortune — for though his father had always grumbled about being wronged out of it by his strait-laced, penurious old uncle, he, Jasper, had never imagined anything could possibly come of it — had suddenly brought to the surface some of the finer graces of the young man's nature. To be taken at a high estimate flattered him immensely. He preserved a wise reticence about his past, and his father had never been personally communicative. Regina's friendliness, her lofty bearing and pure pride, woke an intense admiration in his soul. But he was not capable of redemption even through love, he possessed none of the truer ambitions, he lived merely in the present, in personal, sensuous delights. The few inspired longings died out. A blinder woman, who loved him, might have kept him to a certain height. Regina's interest was too impersonal, too really intellectual. The tones and looks and smiles *he* had seen women use were all deficient. He could come so near, no nearer. Cynthia's half satirical bluntness secretly mortified him at times. So he had turned to the sweet, impulsive, daring, inexperienced child, Perdita, and taken delicious draughts of pleasure with little thought of the ending until an urgent necessity confronted him.

There was at first a curious jealousy of Winterburne as something belonging to the Halfords' past life, in which he had no share. Regina's distance and coldness had appeared to him as evidences of positive dislike, and he, too, ranged himself on the side of what he considered her settled convictions. He caught easily at second-hand opinions. But now that he had come to realize and enjoy the advantage of wealth, he grudged the other his capacity of increasing it. He had a way of depreciating him with small touches of irony too delicate to resent, until it became absolutely envious, until he covertly accused him of dishonest purposes. Only the fact that the Bradley lands are not to be the greater factor in Winterburne's fortune roused Regina to a sense of her own injustice in allowing these half-veiled sneers to *pass unchallenged*.

This Jasper takes as an evidence of her growing interest in him. He makes the one effort, as he thinks, to come up to her standard; but it is compounded largely of a desire to triumph over Winterburne and possess a wife whose ambition will be a higher social status. In her hands he will be sure of not dropping down. To have the sole right to this proud, beautiful girl seems worth striving for.

His failure he ascribes not so much to her preference for Winterburne, as to the desire of sharing his wealth, since he knows this would be the moving power if he were a woman. With the spite of a small mind he has planted an arrow to rankle in that proud soul. For the rest, the quality he calls fate, and in which he largely believes, has led him along. But now he is done with Beverly. His experience in living up to a long line of ancestors has not proved satisfactory. He prefers a plunge into a different kind of pleasure, and he has made or marred his fate by a marriage that in his critical moods seems simply a source of amusement. He must at least get that out of it.

Some five or six days later the Halfords are informed that Perdita has recovered sufficiently to see her relatives. Mrs. Halford and Regina make the first call.

The invalid is still in bed, sitting partially up amid a multitude of pillows, and arrayed in a cloud of laces. Her small pale face looks like that of a very child. The brown pallor does not improve her, the scarlet has gone out of her lips, and her eyes have a curious furtive expression in them. Regina's tall regality quite overshadows her. Looking at her, all Jasper's jealousy is roused anew. With the delight of a small mind he is glad he has reduced her to poverty, since he could sting her in no other way. Her desires are of the luxurious order, and he knows how hard and trying the pinches of poverty are to refinement.

Perdita seems very glad to see them, though she is languid and does not talk much. Regina makes an effort to save them all from awkwardness, and repeats the conventional nothings with a rare art that quite rouses the *invalid*. Mrs. Crouse sits on one side, between the bed and

the window; Jasper is out and in. The fire is touched upon lightly, the wedding journey is too old a subject, so they do not lengthen out their visit unnecessarily.

Regina kisses the poor little face that has never looked so plain and joyless. Mrs. Halford cannot help her tears, and Perdita's lashes are beaded with dewiness when she at last raises her motherly face.

"That child is miserably unhappy," declares Mrs. Halford with emphasis. "If I *could* see her alone! No doubt she has the best of care, and her pretty gown—did you notice—was fastened with a diamond pin. Jasper has such a constrained air, and seems to hold you at arm's length. He was so like—like a son, that the change is painful."

"It is best *not* to see her alone," says Regina. "If there is any great sorrow I think she will come back to us—she knows so little of the real world. But we must not intensify any trouble between her and Jasper. It may be only nervousness after all."

"She looks so poorly. And Jasper is extremely fond of beauty. He admired you so much, Regina," says the mother with innocent pride.

Regina grinds her heel down in the rug at the bottom of the phaeton with bitter contempt. It is that she should have allowed him to admire her, to come near enough to ask her for her woman's favor, love.

The next day it is Cynthia, who has double charges of discretion.

"You need not have been alarmed," she says on her return. "Mrs. Crouse never left her a moment, if I had wanted to talk treason and stratagem. She is not obtrusive, but you feel that she is on guard. Perdita looks as if she were ghost-haunted. I can't help thinking there must be some story to that tragic night."

Perdita improves, sits up, and one warm day is taken out to drive. But she looks wan and spiritless. They visit her familiarly, but there is no opportunity for confidence, if there is any to give. And one morning Jasper

calls on them and announces that they are going away by the doctor's orders. "If they would like to come and say good-by" — but he begs them to be very careful not to excite her. "She has grown such a nervous little puss that the least thing overcomes her."

He is a trifle more serious, but the startling events have left no particular impress upon him. He hedges himself about with a punctiliousness that savors of authority.

"O Jasper!" cries Mrs. Halford, "you will make her happy! — you will try?" and her tender soul rises to her dewy eyes.

"She is very easily made happy," he returns; but whether this is the casual observation of experience, or a covert reflection on Perdita's simplicity, Regina cannot determine.

"If you are going so soon," says Cynthia with an unexpectedly wise thought for which her sister secretly thanks her, "why can we not come down to the station and see you off? Leave-takings are always more or less trying, and when you can serve a double purpose, wish one *bon voyage*, and have an audience to preserve the composure of the scene — I hate good-bys, except when you are to meet again on the morrow."

"Why, — yes, admirable," he answers. "I hope she will soon be herself again."

No one asks if he has any intention of returning. Not a word has been exchanged concerning business.

"Then, I shall see you all at the train?" with a degree of his old airiness. "We start at three."

They are waiting on the station platform when the coach comes down at an easy pace. Mrs. Crouse has a satchel, a travelling-rug and an extra wrap in her arms. She is dressed for a journey, and it relieves Mrs. Halford's anxious mind to know that Perdita will have an attentive nurse. It also relieves Jasper to think there will be no one in Beverly intimate with his personal affairs, who may be tempted to gossip. He assists Perdita, keeps his arm around her, and sends in Mrs. Crouse for the tickets. *Perdita* does not look quite so haggard, but there is a wide

difference between her and these two blooming girls. Only the merest common-places can be exchanged, the kisses are given as the train comes winding around the curve.

"You will come and visit us? you will write?" Mrs. Halford pleads.

Perdita is lifted up the steps, settled in the window end of the seat. She sends a poor pathetic little smile out to them, and the train moves on.

A day or so after Jasper Bradley's departure, Mr. Sayre is notified by one of his legal brethren that he has accepted the plaintiff's side in what promises to be something of a fight, unless Mr. Winterburne can be induced to give up the contest.

Mr. Sayre's glance indicates his surprise.

"I did not mean at first to have anything to do with it," explains portly Mr. Talcott. "The young man came to me for an opinion or two, and he doesn't appear to be one of the generous kind. Really, I suppose we all like to have what is our own. The circumstances seem to be largely in his favor. Then, he has a feeling that the Warwick cousin outgeneraled them all in the purchase of that mining-land. I am instructed to dispossess the other heirs and require the full amount of the inheritances. I compelled him to make one compromise, however. Mrs. Halford is to be released from any demand for past interest. It will come hard on a family of women. Do you know if they have any means besides?"

"Only a very little. Jasper Bradley need not have been quite so exacting," says Mr. Sayre indignantly.

"He suggested that in some other manner he meant to make it up to them. It is the young man he feels so savage about. But I shall not press any one unduly for a settlement," and he gives a shrewd half-smile. My impression is that economy is not a virtue indigenous to Jasper Bradley, and that the estate had better be nursed along for his benefit.

Notice is served on the heirs. Court is in session and the matter comes up at once. Everybody is interested. *Experts are there to examine the signatures. The Halfords*

are compelled to testify as to the finding of the will. Mr. Gedicke corroborates it all. The jurors incline to the side of the ladies, but the evidence is against them. After much deliberation, much honest investigation, the verdict is reluctantly given to sustain the will.

Norman Winterburne comes over and grasps Mrs. Halford's hands, his clear eyes fervent with sympathy.

"We are beaten and it all looks fair," he admits, "but I do not give up." He would like to add "for your sake," but Regina's steady eyes are upon him.

CHAPTER XX

FACING DIVERS NECESSITIES

What need the bridge much broader than the flood?
The fairest grant is the necessity.

Much Ado About Nothing.

WHEN the Halfords go over the accounts of the last eighteen months, they find themselves in debt to the Bradley estate. Regina insists that this shall be made good, and then they must look the future in the face and economize. What else, she can hardly put in words. But it seems as if a young woman of two and twenty, with average abilities and education, should be able to find some path out of the labyrinth.

"And we thought we were done with economy," exclaims Cynthia ruefully. "We have not been really extravagant, and we were not rolling in wealth; but there is a wide difference in the interest account of a few thousands and nearly forty thousand."

"We must give up the phaeton, and it was such a pleasure," confesses Mrs. Halford with a sigh.

Regina glances at her mother. The events of the past six weeks have worn her considerably; and the tears she has shed in secret for Perdita have made her nervous and desponding. It seems cruel to reduce her to such straits again. They ought to give up their good, kindly Martha; indeed, it is a question whether they ought not retire to a smaller cottage.

Mr. Sayre has been their warm friend; indeed, they have had no lack of the pure appreciative sympathy refinement understands how to proffer without wounding the delicate pride of the unfortunate. And he explains to Regina that *simple legal demands* are one thing, and a high sentimental

independence another. They will restore exactly what the law exacts, not a penny more, and he proves to her that her view is rather overstrained.

"But we cannot take Jasper Bradley's money," she cries haughtily.

"It is *not* his money. I think the less of Silas Bradley that he could die without making any effort to find his relatives or know how they were situated, when he must have felt that the man to whom he was leaving his fortune had already proved himself a spendthrift. And Jasper Bradley will follow in his father's footsteps. He has shown some contemptible qualities. Consequently, I do not feel inclined to generosity in his behalf. Allow me to arrange this matter, Miss Halford."

Regina walks slowly homeward. She has not said even to herself, What must I do, what can I take up, that will lighten our burden? She can teach, she is fitted for that now; but there is only the Seminary, and they do not need any extra help. Two months ago she might have made an arrangement. A plan has been floating through her brain, but she has not had time to digest it thoroughly. She and Cynthia could start a school for some of the smaller children on the attractive kindergarten plan. Miss Hilliard, who seems to have a wide range of practical knowledge, would advise them. She has hardly been generous in her estimate of Miss Hilliard. She feels sometime there will be a long accounting to go over with herself; for she possesses that subtle power of arraigning her own soul, of demanding of it some measure, if not the precise measure, she exacts of others. Her refined, exquisite womanhood has some flaw or failure; and just now she feels hopelessly weak, when she ought to face duty, to accept cheerfully anything which may prove her in earnest.

When she enters the cosey parlor she is a trifle startled. It is an October afternoon and a dull fire smoulders in the grate. The honeysuckle is still abloom at the corner of the porch: it has been an unusually warm autumn. In her high-backed chair by the window Mrs. Halford sits asleep,

and though the daughter recognizes a moment later that it is partly the effect of the green gloom of the vines, her first shock is severe. Certainly her mother looks extremely delicate. Ah, if another sorrow should be added.

There is a rush and some rapid steps. Cynthia has been down to Warwick spending the day with Miss Hilliard, who has been kept steadily at work of late with the orders that have poured in upon her, while Regina on her part has been engrossed, so Cynthia has swung back and forth to tick off friendly confidences.

She is eager and blooming, the long drowsy lidded eyes alight with unwonted fervor. She tugs at her gloves as if she would never have to consider the cost of a new pair, and tosses her hat with its long sprays of scarlet flowers over on the table.

"O Re," she cries with her olden vehemence, "what *do* you suppose has happened! Of course I do not mean to undertake this if there is any *great* objection, but I do not see how there can be. I've been wondering ever since the change in affairs what we were going to do. The resources of a place like Beverly are soon exhausted. One could keep summer boarders, but there are no stores or shops or places for women to earn money as in a large city. I am not really accomplished, the little smatterings don't count. I was talking it over last week with my dear Miss Hilliard — and to-day — I don't know who first hit upon the plan," and she flushes with a certain embarrassment. "Mr. Winterburne brought Mr. Armitage home with him to dinner. We talked about the school Mr. Armitage has all planned out. The difficulty is to find the right sort of teacher, for it isn't to be on the footing of an ordinary school."

Cynthia pauses for breath, she has rushed along so rapidly. Mrs. Halford sits up in her chair and says most irrelevantly, "Why, I certainly have been asleep."

"Then wake up and hear this," exclaims Cynthia laughingly. "I was telling Regina — and, Re" — she turns to her sister — "I said I wished I knew enough to offer my *services*. They all took me up at once, and insisted that I

was just the person. You see, it isn't whether I can translate a Latin sentence or explain a geometrical problem, but to teach these shrewd little barbarians some of the methods of civilized living, — why cleanliness is best, why ignorance is a shame, why they must obey their parents, learn to mend their clothes and do their hair tidily, and dozens of matters that ordinary schools have no time for, that are, indeed, rather out of their province. And it all came to this — that I can have the position and earn fifty dollars a month. I should remain through the week with Miss Hilliard, coming home on Friday afternoon. And there are a few things I can do for her, although I said I ought really to pay my board. But, you see, *if* I went it would make quite a difference in our income. We could keep Martha. And I could pay the rent steadily — I've been planning all the way up in the train. If you didn't like me to stay I could come home every night, only through the winter it would be harder."

Regina sits astounded. While she has been meaning to take the matter in hand and face the problem Cynthia has actually done it. She is the elder. To her belongs the duty of sacrifice.

"But — would you really — like it?" she stammers weakly. She cannot imagine any one doing such a thing for choice. The rows of unkempt children rise before her.

"I am not like you, Regina." Cynthia flushes distressfully, for this is in the nature of a disagreeable reflection. "What I mean, dear," in a soft, deprecating tone, "is, that the things, the surroundings, the people, would be a great trial to you. We don't make our natures and certain likes and dislikes that seem to grow with us. Mr. Winterburne said one day in an argument with the 'Parson' as Miss Strong calls him," and Cynthia blushes vividly, "that there was no real virtue in doing a thing one hated unless it were a clear duty; that even doing it for discipline wasn't as heroic as one often believed it, since the virtue was determined by the result; that the strength and time were *wasted* unless some positive good were evolved to the world

as well as one's self; and that useless self-martyrdom was quite as bad as selfish pleasure. What I mean is, that this would try you every day and hour; your nerves vibrate to a different centre. It would amuse me, and provoke me, and I might sometimes question whether the small crop was worth the great effort at tilling and weeding and watering, and all that; but it wouldn't jar and fret and make me seem out of place."

"I don't know that I have any right to such nerves," says Regina bravely. "It is unsisterly, it is selfish, to be willing to have you do what I should hate to do myself."

"It depends upon how well I should like to do it. I couldn't spend hours painting a tree or a shrub, rubbing it out and putting it in; and I couldn't bother over a face as Miss Hilliard does, until you can fairly guess what it will say when it opens its mouth, as you *know* it will. I don't enjoy duty calls, and some of the discussions on the high-up subjects bore me horribly. I'd rather discuss other things with a group of dirty children, and wind up with a lecture on the beneficent properties of soap and water, applied with the strength of one's good right hand. You like home-making, all the sweet small courtesies of life; and, mamsie, if you were going to choose, wouldn't you rather have a house kept by Regina than one kept by me? You'd be apt to see the machinery in mine, you wouldn't in hers."

"But I should miss you very much, now that Perdita is gone," the mother says tremulously.

"In our altered circumstances can we afford one girl purely for ornament?" and Cynthia laughs. "Then, I should have two days and two parts of days at home. It is a pity to have to consider money; but we have had our fling at luxury, and now we come down to the plain questions of life: I rather like them."

"You are a brave girl, Cynthia."

Regina crosses the room, and clasps her arms about Cynthia's neck. The curling bronze mop makes a pretence of *being put up in a coil* nowadays, but there are always soft

fuzzy ends. She stoops and kisses the flushed, eager face; and the caress is so tender, so unwonted, that the younger girl's eyes grow dewy. Regina has never been lavish of her kisses to any one but her mother. Then she goes out to the kitchen to inquire about the supper and compose her flurried nerves somewhat.

Cynthia meanwhile flies over to her mother, and takes the soft hands in hers while she sums up the plan again. She is undeniably elated. There is a feeling that Regina's greater delicacy should be shielded, that her finer pride must be sheltered from stings and mortifications, that her tastes must have the rarefied air in which they blossom so serenely.

"Mr. Winterburne brought me down to the station," she says, "and we quite agreed that Regina wasn't the one to do battle with the rough things of every-day life. Since one of us is needed at home, she is much the better. You and she take such comfort in going out together, though now we have given up Dolly — it isn't so nice to be poor after all, is it? May be sometime we can have her again. And when I come home I shall have such a lot of amusing things to tell — I shall be as good as a comic paper. Miss Hilliard said I was one day."

Some visitors drop in during the evening, and it is rather late when the girls go to bed. Cynthia has planned for a good long talk, but Regina has so many little odds and ends before she can settle herself to the real business of the night that Cynthia is fast asleep.

Regina is unfeignedly glad. She wants to take herself in hand in a little sharp self-communing. She knows they will assent to Cynthia's desire; it is really her wish, and will render her happier; and the money is not to be despised. She might make a little at painting china or fans or some of the trifles of the day, but those would not be a regular certainty. She is useless and helpless except in this narrow grove. And she had meant to do something grand and noble. A bitter cry goes up from her soul. It is the old story of the great thing, not the daily washing

in Jordan. *Are the walls too narrow, is the space too strait? What could she do in that larger world?*

These are the results of her strenuous efforts; let her look unshrinkingly at them. She is a refined and graceful girl; well, handsome, and with a certain intellectual ability that wins her the admiration of her compeers. But she must be kept from rude contact like a cloistered nun; some one else must take up the rough side while she "sits in silence calm and sweet." What real influence does she exert? She has dreamed of winning Jasper Bradley up to some manlier heights, and failed ignominiously. She has not been able with all her vaunted discrimination to read him aright. Something might have been done for Perdita, shaping her character to a truer standard. She might have held the child by a tenderer love; instead, she has allowed herself to be wearied by the pettiness, and believe there really was nothing to work upon. She has made idols of beauty and harmony and self-culture; she has been playing pretentiously among the minor graces; and in this trying time she finds they are not the larger virtues from which she can draw sustenance and be helped on her way with clearer vision.

Regina Halford compresses her lips with passionate scorn. She despises herself for the narrow bands in which she has confined her soul, stopped its true growth. Oh, how shall she retrace her steps, for after all she has not meant to be this self-indulgent woman. She has supposed if any great stress was laid upon her she would rise to the emergency. Instead, it is all small, wearisome matters, and she shrinks from them. There would be no real heroism in her taking up this project of Cynthia's; for she would not accomplish half the good, and the friction would be tremendous. There is some fatal lack in her: how shall she supply it?

At breakfast the next morning Cynthia refers to the new plan.

"If you think it quite impossible I must write at once and say so. They are anxious to open the first of *November*," she says tentatively.

"It is not impossible of course. But you must not feel compelled to such a step. I had been thinking — of a school here at home" — rather hesitatingly.

"It would be a nuisance, and disturb mother too much. This will only take the time of one, and give us as much money."

"You are very good — generous I mean — about it."

Cynthia laughs with a joyous amusement.

"I didn't think particularly about being generous. I am afraid — it was because it pleased *me*. And then, Mr. Winterburne is anxious to make it a success, to get hold of the children, especially as he will have to give up many other matters on account of this wretched will. He had planned some houses that were to be rented to the sober and industrious workmen, and now he can't build them. All of his profits will have to go back to the business to make up for what is coming out. But they are all so interested" —

Cynthia stops short with a feeling that Regina may be bored, as a rather dispirited expression settles over the fair face.

"Yes," Regina answers absently, but she is thinking of the fortune put to nobler uses than any she has dreamed of in her narrow plans. And she has not considered Winterburne one of the deep, ardent students of that great problem, the world's advancement. Perhaps these things were of importance as well as the gathering up of knowledge that could not be worked into any but the highest channels, where there was an abundance of it already.

"Mother," rousing up suddenly, "do you think I can fill both places to you if we let Cynthia go? Am I not a little dull and preoccupied at times?"

"You get deep into speculation." Cynthia smiles a little. "Well," consolingly, "a good many people do. Mr. Armitage does. And I think Mr. Winterburne is a good deal like — like me," coloring. "He goes at a thing at once, does it, and thinks it over afterward. It may not *always* be wise, but it saves you a great deal of trouble in deciding between half a dozen plans."

Cynthia is rather amazed that she has won her way so easily. She has expected to combat all sorts of arguments. What can have happened to Regina, or is it the hard certainty of poverty that weighs upon her. If it were thousands instead of the paltry hundreds.

It is a soft, brooding, Indian summery day, with just enough sun to wrap all things in a dun gold haze, to fill the air with autumnal fragrance.

"What an afternoon for a drive!" Cynthia exclaims, yawning over her gown. But since she has had her wishes granted she will not grumble at putting her wardrobe in order.

"I want to go up to Bradley House," says Regina suddenly. "I have not seen it since the fire. Everybody haunted it so at first, and just now I feel like a long, loitering walk."

"Don't ask me to come. I should rise and follow, and duty certainly must come before pleasure."

Regina smiles. There are times when she is fond of indulging in solitary walks, and to-day is one. She has not solved her last night's tangle, and would really prefer to be alone.

"Then I shall not tempt you."

Half an hour afterward Cynthia is very glad; for Mr. Winterburne, who has some unexpected business in town, and is desperately in earnest to see what the prospect with Cynthia really is, surprises them with a call.

"Oh!" she cries eagerly, "what a pity Regina has gone out! I am not of as much importance as you all imagined, and can be spared. Regina was very sweet about it, although I know she thinks it will be dreadful."

"Alice will be made supremely happy. What a fortunate wish yours was, yesterday!—fortunate for us," and he smiles. "Have they truly consented?"

"You had better wait until you have tried me. Perhaps I shall not do at all. But I always did get on with the 'lower classes,'" laughingly. "Does it show total *depravity*?"

"I'm afraid I am not good authority on orthodox questions. The getting on interests me more."

He studies the bright girl, who flushes consciously under his gaze. There is something extremely attractive about her. Perhaps Alice is right. It is the possible virtues that make their marks that are the soldiers tramping steadily onward to the field of battle.

"I was so afraid they would not consent ;" he says, but his spoken voice is quite irrelevant to his subject matter.

"I told you if there was any question mother would prefer Regina's care to mine. Don't imagine me at all jealous," she cries with sudden energy. "Regina has little ways and touches that go to one's heart, and mother has been used to her care. Regina is like one of those strange subtle, East Indian poems; you enjoy having them read aloud when all the combinations are harmonious, and you delight in them without understanding a bit. And I'm the homely jingling bit of rhyme one sings when one is sweeping a room. You see, one don't need to sweep more than once a day luckily, for there's dust and no end of pother. And she comes in with her quiet grace and makes the atmosphere fragrant, and you get drowsy and can be lulled to rest. It's mother's time of resting. And Regina can soothe so delightfully when — when the circumstance, or is it the adjustment? is all right. She will find no end of pleasure poring over her books, and doing bits of painting in the odd spells, and speculating. Still, I can't help thinking she should be a great lady somewhere, one of the leaders wielding a high social influence. But I don't suppose it will ever be," and Cynthia sighs.

That is his thought of her, always has been. It is the one central gem in Cynthia's rambling discourse.

"Where has she gone?" he asks suddenly.

"Regina? Oh, she is making her first pilgrimage to the ruins of Bradley House. I've been up a dozen times, but it is always Re's fancy to wait until the crowd and rush are over and have it all to herself. There was some errand, too, at Mrs. Hardin's about butter, I think," and Cynthia

laughs at the queer juxtaposition. "But she will stroll around most of the afternoon, I know. And you want to see her—it is too bad! Mother will not be up for a good hour—I think she has not been so strong latterly, but she always did take a rest after dinner."

"I can come in again," he said with a quick resolve. "There is something I can do"—

It would be short-sighted to keep him an hour or two when every moment is valuable to her, and Cynthia will be able to chatter enough with him by and by.

"I wish you might be able to find Regina. When you are through, walk out that way to meet her."

A slight color mounts to his brow, since that is his only errand; but he does not confess it as he goes off with a light heart and a presentiment that Providence has in some way befriended him. He has never seen Regina alone during the summer renewal of their acquaintanceship, nor through these tragic autumn troubles. He can only recall her mysterious softening, and quite forgives her the icy barrier she thrust up between them at first. He does not indulge in any wild supposition that she loves him; he only hopes that, in the changed aspect of events, she may see what he can become to her, what he can give her, how he can help her to the aims of her own life. That they are not his, that she might traverse his best plans, narrow his ideas and purposes, he does not consider. He is willing to do for others in the great sympathy of his generous soul: why should he not do as much and more for the woman he loves? In his utter ignorance he does not demand the divine return without which no love can be perfect. It will be enough for him simply to do and to love, for her to accept.

He strides through the town and up the hill, thinking of the May day. Everything is changed, however, even the tall hemlocks and cedars; the branching spruces and pines have put on a deeper green, while the larches are turning a faint pale yellow, and dropping their needles in hillocks and ridges. The grass at the edges of the road is drying

out. Maples still flaunt in scarlet and crimson, but the foliage is so much thinner that the vaporous sky sets them in a haze. Here and there a great russet oak or a copper beech darkens the landscape like a tint of coming night. It is grand in its suggestion of a summer's work completed and sealed with the signet of autumn. The very air has a richer flavor, as if all the ripening of fruit had gone into it.

The children are playing out by the door of the Hardin cottage.

"Do you know whether Miss Halford has come down?" he asks.

"No, she ain't. She's gettin' some wild flowers and leaves, I guess, and lookin' at the burnt-up house. You'll find her;" and the little girl nods her head confidently.

He goes on and soon reaches the ruins. The thick stone walls are standing, and the front porches begrimed with smoke, and broken, are still there, the wind the morning of the fire blowing the flame in the other direction. Here Mrs. Halford sat; here is the ruined doorway that framed in the tall, slim, beautiful girl. Was she so lovely in form and feature when he first saw her?

He wanders about in a curious mood. Jasper Bradley has given orders for a sale in parcels of any size, and Mr. Hardin has made a bid for his favorite, coveted, highly cultivated farming-spot; two or three men have been considering the valuable woodland. As soon as perfect titles can be given, it will be divided up and the glory of the old place gone forever. He cannot help thinking Jasper Bradley is a degenerate descendant, and does not much regret that the flames should give it a funeral pyre. The old things pass away, the new are fuller of stirring life, broader, braver. He cannot imagine himself sinking down to inert living among those old walls, the modern interests are too strong. He must be out in the thick of the fray. But he does not despise the scholar, and the poet, and the antiquarian. They give to the larger world the result of their meditations, and are not purely selfish.

He takes the path up to the other eminence, and casts

his eyes around. There is a graceful drooping figure sitting at the foot of a great tree, in a sort of mossy hollow where two ridges of root have pressed up out of the ground. In her lap are a few of the last flowers, some delicate brown red mosses, and the clear-cut stems of Indian pipe in their waxen whiteness. They have had a pathetic meaning to her in the gathering. Bradley House has no further interest to its owner except the money that can be wrung out of the ground, so she will not be grudged these simple treasures.

She has been reflecting on some of her favorite theories, her passionate adherence to the belief that a long line of ancestors must perforce accumulate virtues and a certain force of character. But these should be an outgrowth of some purpose farther back; and if there were poorer things, dull, slow self-satisfactions, instead of great reaches forward, the very forces themselves must stupefy in time. It is not sufficient merely to have a purpose, she begins vaguely to understand that. There must be an endeavor to perfect something of service to one's fellow creatures, high or low; the pursuit must have some aim beyond mere personal pleasure or gratification. And hers has been as much personal pleasure as Jasper Bradley's—she can see the likeness in many ways, and she despises herself for it. Has there been as great a pretence in her fastidiousness? As much of that curious imitativeness needed only for an outside wrap to cover inward barrenness of soul?

Honestly she decides not. Her efforts have been earnest, only the aim has not been worth it. His were to please her perhaps, and for the sake of a harmonious symmetry. He has really no ideals. She might have seen that earlier, but she has been misled by the clever assumption. She has been an easy prey; no wonder he dreamed of marrying her. Does he smile at her efforts for his mental regeneration, her preference for his delicate ways and his apparent knowledge? Or is his the nature in which the returning wave washes away the former impression? If she could blot him out!

Is there a step coming towards her? It may be un-

wisdom now to linger in these favorite wilds. She springs up, her treasures gathered in her handkerchief, and confronts Jasper's opposite, Winterburne. How curious that both these men should be of Bradley stock!

"Did I alarm you?" and he flushes at the thought of his selfish imprudence. "I have been at the house. Cynthia said you had come to take a look at the old ruin. One can hardly believe it was so beautiful in the summer, so strong, as if it might endure forever. And it has gone."

"Did she send you?" Regina Halford says sharply. All the irritation comes to the surface, flushes her face in passionate scarlet. He has come inopportunately, he has taken her at an unfortunate moment. His proud, strong, erect figure aggravates the weakness and lassitude that have hauntingly followed her scathing self-condemnation.

"No; I wanted to come—I wanted to see you. Regina!"

His face tells the story. His deep eyes in which the tenderness leaps and quivers as if it could kindle any soul with the sparks it rays off, the ineffable softening of the lines about the mouth, that are hardly shadowed by the narrow line of mustache, his whole indescribable attitude. It transfixes her for a moment, but it also brings up the old resistance, the certainty that she does not love him. But he will ask his question—that she cannot prevent. She has fancied—and there is Cynthia, better fitted every way. Why should he persist in this blunder!

"Yes," in a soft, vague manner, coming no nearer, not even stretching out his hand to snatch the one that hangs at her side, or striving to subjugate with a man's imperious passion or all conquering love. "Yes—it is the old question. I loved you then. But it was too soon. You did not know. And I have been afraid through the past summer—not positively afraid, apprehensive lest some other fascination should lure you astray. I was right. It did not touch you;" with an exultant ring in the tone.

She makes a curious gesture of disdain. It *has* come near to her, swayed her, but not in the sense he indicates. *It mortifies her that he fancied it might.*

"When we parted that night, so long ago that I occasionally think it must have been in another world, I was ignorant of the extent of your good fortune. When I heard, I made up my mind to wait patiently until I had something to offer. Ah, you can't think how the remembrance of you sweetened and lightened the struggles. 'It is for her,' I said, 'and it must succeed.' And it did. There was no doubt, when this share of the money came to me. I don't decry the power of money, I never did, but I should have succeeded without it. However, it enabled me to take another step that has set me on a firm foundation. I shall simply go on to fortune. This sharp turn in the wheel is only temporary. It is for you and yours that I regret, that I would fight. I don't relinquish the struggle altogether. I can't believe a plain common-sense man, with a passion for accumulation, ever meant to will his money to a spendthrift or a spendthrift's heirs. That any one could demean his manhood by wresting the fortunes of defenceless women" —

He pauses in indignation, his deep eyes glowing.

Had *he* been Jasper they would be recipients of his bounty, no doubt. Regina raises her hand a trifle, and bends her head with a slight, haughty movement.

"You may know" — she says faintly, "*I* gave offence. After that" —

A great joy leaps up in his soul. She could not love Jasper Bradley. Ah, he knew that!

"My queen," he says, "you will accept — what a man loves to offer to the woman dearest, to her and hers, with his life's devotion. Let me make amends. You were not meant to struggle with poverty, my beautiful darling. Your path should be over roses always." He comes nearer, he smiles with the sweetest satisfaction of his life. "Oh," tremulously, "you *will* give me this right now, to protect and shelter you, to surround you with all that is choicest, to keep you from any want or care" —

An angry feeling sweeps imperiously through her pulses. "*You think I would marry* — is not that what you mean —

for money? To shelter myself from inconveniences, to sun myself on the borders of ease and delight, you — believe I would marry! Your opinion of me must be high indeed!" and her scarlet lips close in infinite disdain.

"It is not that alone!" He takes a step forward and seizes her hand, almost crushes it in his grasp. "It is because I love you so much, and you — you may come to love me some day. I am willing to wait. Only — I want your life better, easier now. It maddens me to think of your petty sacrifices, your self-denial, your beautiful youth wasted, the fretting cares that like only one drop of water make an unendurable torment, that eat out all the sweetness of life. You are not fitted for that. I saw it long ago."

"I am more cowardly than other women, than Cynthia — than any one who dares to struggle, who takes up her part of the burden!" she says bitterly. That is the sort of womanly impress she has stamped upon his soul. She could despise herself in her exquisite shame, and she hates him for daring to unveil even one of her weaknesses.

"No, I don't think you cowardly. When the true test came you would rise to it. I want to make your life just what it should be. You have only been circling around its grandest truths — but —" how shall he explain. Would she, being a woman, gain anything by a long, arduous struggle with poverty? Would her middle life be rare and sweet and gracious when it had been rasped on every side, hammered into steely resistance by opposing forces, when she had won — what? the right to earn her bread and perhaps her mother's. For the friction in her case must be tremendous.

"I have been making a poor pretence, I know it," and a dull flame flares up in her face, while shivers go through her veins. "I am not in any sense noble or true if I have impressed you with the belief that I shrink from the duties that are, that may be, laid upon me," Regina makes answer incisively.

"I can't argue rightly with you," he returns in a rather depressed tone. "Only — if there were anything you would

like — a profession — a business — I would do all a brother could to help you to it. If you were making some great effort” —

“But I have no genius,” she declares bitterly. “I can never distinguish myself in the higher realms, such as art or literature. I couldn’t be a doctor nor a lecturer,” — she makes a haughty gesture of disdain with her hand as if she could strike down something. “I have a pretty face that might ornament some man’s home who was fond of pictures and plates and jugs. And you propose to give that a proper setting. You are in a certain way sorry for me because poverty has come upon me, and you fancy it will fret me. Thank you” —

“You will not understand,” and he grasps her hand again in both of his. “I love you! love you! love you! All that I can ever get will not be enough to lay at your feet, and I have no fear now for my own prosperity. You shall live where you like — not in that wretched little Warwick! You shall travel, you shall surround yourself with friends of your own choosing,” he is wild enough in that moment to give up his own ideals for her sake, his cherished plans of being of some service to a small corner of the world.

“Meanwhile, what will you do?” she asks sharply.

“Go on loving you. But I shall do that in any event until you are interdicted to me by some final act of your own, as only *one* act can.”

“I shall save you from any such sacrifice as that of being the husband of a woman mercenary enough to marry you simply for her own aggrandizement,” she returns haughtily. “You are mistaken if you think you can buy me, even if I am not worth much.”

“I have not meant to buy you. I have hoped — you would love me a little. It would be only through love that you could take all else. It was not injustice to the sweetest attribute of womanhood, it was simply that all my delight would be in giving.”

She does not understand the generous soul, so humble in *its great love that it will wait for the ripe time of appreci-*

ation. He does not know then how badly he has pleaded his cause by not putting himself in the foreground. He has frankly judged her from what he has seen, and he is willing to risk the latent heroism that will some time reach the surface. Must she fight it all out by herself?

"Let us end this," she begins with a cold dignity that borders on contempt; for herself, that she should have made it possible for any man to rate her thus; for him, because he has brought that self before her soul's insight, and it has been unflattering. "If you choose to have matters as they were before, since explanations will be awkward, let them remain so. My decision is only for myself. Every one else is quite unaffected by it."

He has no words in which to reply, only shaken, tumultuous feelings. She turns, and he follows by her side. It is very hard to give up all hopes of winning her; he cannot just now. A consciousness that she really does not love him chills him to the heart's core.

Once in the town, she halts decisively to give him the opportunity of parting.

"I promised to see Cynthia again, and your mother."

Is he brave enough to face them after this? Then he must be the sort of man to walk up to the cannon's mouth. In spite of herself she experiences a sudden admiration for him.

CHAPTER XXI

PASTURES NEW

And the finest fellow of all would be one who would be glad to have lived because the world was chiefly miserable, and his life had come to help some one who needed it. — GEORGE ELIOT.

NORMAN WINTERBURNE enters the cosy sitting-room after the lamps are lighted. Armitage is reading a magazine article aloud to Miss Hilliard. The supper table is laid in the adjoining room, and there is a fragrance of tea and hot biscuits.

"How late you are — Oh, Cynthia has been dismayed with her rash undertaking, or allowed herself to be over-ruled! How tired you look!" and Alice Hilliard's voice is tenderly sympathetic.

"For once you have guessed wrongly. Are you losing your native Yankee craft?"

There is a strained sound in the little laugh he gives, usually so joyous.

"But there is something —"

"I *am* tired. I went up and wandered around Bradley House, and moralized — will that do?"

"And Cynthia" —

"Cynthia comes with the first of the month. You are sure there will be some children, Armitage?"

"Did *no* one object? Let us go out to supper and talk over our tea," and Alice rises.

"Mrs. Halford will miss her a good deal. They had talked it all over, and consented. And I can't help thinking it will be lonely for — for Miss Halford. But we couldn't find a better person."

"No," answers Armitage, as they seat themselves.

"What have you been doing?" Winterburne asks.

That takes the conversation from the Halfords; just now he would fain talk of something else, having met the demands of duty with an untrembling voice. And in a few minutes the young clergyman is deep in the details of his work.

He has come with an earnest, honest endeavor to save both souls and bodies, being justly strenuous about the souls. How fortunate he has been in meeting Winterburne can hardly be put into satisfactory language. They have joined hands heartily to fight one of the great evils of such towns, of all places where there are large numbers of ignorant and indifferent people — drunkenness. Armitage would fain sweep it out of existence with the strong arm of the law, but that is not to be had at present.

"To make something more attractive," has been Winterburne's text. So he has built the Hall in his own way, in spite of doubtful predictions. It is to be opened to the men the next week, with some plain exercises, and there will be two good cheerful rooms, one where men may smoke and talk, the other where the non-smokers and non-talkers may read. Once a week general questions are to be discussed, questions pertaining to the welfare of the town and the townsmen. The school is to be of the industrial pattern. Girls may bring their work, some of the small children will be looked after while their mothers are laboring for bread. There will be entertainment as well as knowledge.

All summer Armitage has been doing his best — up-hill work indeed. The ignorance is stolid, not sharp and shrewd, as in the larger cities. The satisfaction with these surroundings is in itself a commentary on contentment. Yet they grumble at the fact that employers are always making money; that they can live in fine houses, and ride round in carriages; that they can get out of the dust and grime of Warwick and go pleasuring when they like. But Armitage has not gone pleasuring. He has been on the spot to minister to the sick and those in trouble. Deaths have not been infrequent.

"We talk about pure country air," he says, a little discouraged, one day when several families have buried their children, "but they are all doing their best to vitiate God's gift to them. No one seems to care for clean yards or streets, and as for the houses! — I only wonder that more do not go. There ought to be some authority, a health board or something."

"We shall bring that to pass some day," and Winterburne gives his cheery laugh. "It is hard getting people out of old ruts. And where there are but few changes in a generation it is still more difficult. When we get our new cottages" —

But most plans have come to a sudden standstill. Winterburne is served with his notification to restore his share of the Bradley estate, and he has not gone far enough in prosperity to do this without a pinch. He pays out his ready money, and gives notes for the rest. The transfer of the land is of secondary importance. For by following out the trend of the newly opened mine, it is found to run entirely off the Bradley ground, being thrown over by several "faults" and is nearer the rocky base of the mountain.

"A stroke of clear luck," says Dale. "Fortune plays into your hands, after all."

In a certain way Winterburne is devoutly grateful. The prestige and the money have enabled him to take hold of his work with a certainty that helps one to win. He has no need to envy Jasper Bradley, who will reach the end of his in a few years. He wonders occasionally how Jasper could come by the elegance of manner, his years of travel, and his general gentlemanly aspect, unless there had been some other money back of it all. However, he does not grudge him aught. He has a curious feeling that he doesn't want a penny of the estate now, that he is prouder to make his own way.

The Halfords' trouble has borne the most heavily upon him. At first he felt confident Jasper would not exact the *uttermost* from them, or, if it had to be done legally, he

would make amends some other way. But he has learned from Mr. Talcott that Jasper means only to allow the legal length of time for settlement, and requires every penny that can justly be called his. From Mr. Sayre he has gleaned some other facts, that their income will be considerably reduced.

"If something could be done for them! This mistake has changed their lives" —

"It has been a most unfortunate matter, and yet I believed I took every precaution. I examined the old *escritoire* afterward, and I am convinced the will was *put* there. There was no crack or crevice through which so large an article *could* have slipped. Maybe this was what Silas Bradley wanted to explain in those last waning moments of consciousness. I wish to Heaven he had!"

"And there is no method?" — Winterburne looks straight into the lawyer's eyes, who understands.

"No," with a slow shake of the head. "Miss Halford has gone over it all with me, and she knows to a penny. She insisted all the interest should be paid, but Talcott wrung a little out of the fellow. I wouldn't have believed it of young Bradley! He seemed so lavish, so almost ignorant of the value of money — well, I would have called him a generous fellow. Of course the sympathy is all with the Halfords. Socially it will not alter their position. We of Beverly may be a little clannish," and the lawyer gives his brief smile, "but once a friend, once received and recognized, mere money can make no difference. We value people according to their merits, I am glad to say. We do not bow down to the golden calf;" and Mr. Sayre's rather long upper lip curves with a touch of superior breeding. "Miss Halford is a handsome girl, an extremely refined and cultivated person. She can marry well, there is no doubt of that."

Winterburne winces a little. She would not be the first woman to retrieve misfortune by marriage. He remembers the impression she made at Mount Sardis.

So he can do nothing but wait for some opportune mo-

ment. From Cynthia's frank demeanor he learns a few facts.

"Something must be done presently," Cynthia says to her friend Alice. "And Regina is such a charming housekeeper that she really cannot be spared to breast the world. I must try."

The school question settles that. Cynthia will have no bothersome examinations, no anxiety, and her salary will add to the scant income. If he could make it twice as much — but he knows that would be considered impertinent generosity. Mr. Sayre's words keep rankling in his soul — "She will marry well." And it is this that urges on his passion for her to the wretched mess he has made of it all.

He has not supposed any woman with the delicate instincts of Regina Halford *could* marry merely for a home, for a release from the carking cares of life. Yet he has a misgiving, a certainty really, that she does not love him with the sweet surrender of womanhood's strong preference. But he wants her. She it is that can round out his inner life to completeness, when she has learned the way. Are there not some lessons better studied together? All he is, whatever he has, can be hers for the using, for the sweet home shelter and affection.

But he has blundered again. He has seen only one side of the truth. He has not studied women, he has known only Alice with her frank ways and direct answers. Proud, sensitive, involved natures are so great a mystery to him, in his plain, manly fashion of looking at things. He had none of the elegancies of lover-like speech for a woman who stood so far off. If he might have come nearer, clasped her in his arms, the divine stream would have overleaped all obstructions. It was a mistake keeping himself to the last, though in any event she would have had the stinging consciousness just then, that she would be taking this prosperity to set her life in a larger place again.

When they have compared their thoughts and experiences, when Armitage has gone with his friend's genial *sympathy* and God-speed, when he has inspected Alice's

work, commended and made one or two rather spirited suggestions, he kisses her and goes off to his room. Nothing is to be stopped because this woman has refused him the right to watch over and guard her. She can hardly get out of God's hands, he remembers.

One thing comes back and humbles him. He has not exactly offered to throw away his life for this woman, but he has come quite near. It would have been a "divided duty." The passionate delight of a home, the ideal home of his dreams, with her, might have outweighed other claims, given them a sort of irksomeness rather than enjoyment. It is hard to take duty only, when duty and love might walk hand in hand. She is not ready for it. Let him gird himself up anew. There may be some other plane of life on which they can meet. His nature is too rich and self-sustaining to be utterly cast down.

Cynthia Halford is so occupied with her own fervent desires, that when Winterburne and Regina enter the cosy parlor in no undue agitation, not a suspicion of the true state of the case is aroused. He is too really bewildered in soul and brain to get outside of the level lines of conventionalism. It is like some safe fence that keeps one from straying.

"So you found her?" Cynthia says gayly. "Did you both weep over the ruins of your ancestors? perhaps ancestral pile would be more neat and effective."

Winterburne nods, and goes over to Mrs. Halford and shakes hands cordially.

"Shall I be forgiven for robbing you of Miss Cynthia?" he asks, with a quaint tenderness. "We all want her so much. Alice is delighted. It's an odd sort of experiment."

"And because I flash out of the regulation orbit and make circles for myself, I am the one to undertake an experiment. Hear that, mother dear. One's peculiarities may sometimes lead one to greatness," she says humorously.

"You are very good in thus consenting to part with her," he replies still to Mrs. Halford.

Regina tingles with a quick, resentful flush. He would put it on the ground of a favor granted them.

"One of us would need to earn some money," she says decisively. "We are no longer lilies of the field. And it is *we* who should be thankful for the good fortune coming to our very door. Most people in a stress of adversity have to go out and seek it. We should be foolishly short-sighted not to accept it."

"Regina has a substratum of good common-sense," observes Cynthia, rather elated with this way of placing the matter on its true standing.

All the preliminaries being settled, Winterburne goes his way. Regina interests herself unwontedly, and Cynthia is delighted. They can even plan what the money will be used for. Regina does not show the secret stabs in her face or voice. She, fragile and beautiful flower, must have some one to smooth the rough places for her delicate steps. *He* would have married her that she might come back to her serene existence. What a poor, weak thing she must appear to them all. The wonderful woman she has been shaping and training, adding to, and lopping off, is utterly inadequate for the real work of life. She has lowered instead of raising herself. She is to sail on the smooth dead calms of commonplace, and look at the workers. Why, it seems to her that the young girl trudging back and forth to daily labor, distasteful, unintellectual, was nobler.

In that hour of discontent and humiliation her head drops wearily on her slim, white hands, and some bitter tears force their way through. A dim consciousness comes to her that she has never, even in that distant youth, — it looks so far back now, — entered into the true spirit of things. Always it has been the high places, the reaching up in her own strength, the pleasures and influences afar. She has disdained the small duties, the daily cares, with a sort of royal indifference, and she is left alone with them. Her place is here. No one says to her, Come up higher. *Ah, one man would have taken her out of it, but it was*

only to give her wide and lovely spaces to walk in. Even he did not say, "Come over and help us in the work for humanity." Cynthia is chosen for that.

Something floats through her soul like a faint chime—"The duty nearest." It is not any new truth. Are there any grand new truths? Were they not all told more than eighteen hundred years ago? yet the restless, unsatisfied souls have gone on seeking a better way, crying out, "Lo here, and lo there," with passionate striving to dress up the old ones with the great joy of a new discoverer. Has it brought peace? Has she not mistaken all the unrest for intellectual activities, and prided herself upon the growth that would presently bloom into rare perfectness? And there is no blossom. It is simply going on. That is all there is for her, let her face it. Cultivation cannot make a genius, and she has been secretly praying all these months for some inspiration that should set her up above ordinary souls.

Very few come clean and dry out of the slough of despond. But when Regina realizes that she has not been so much thrust in by an untoward fate, as she has allowed herself to drift and drop in her efforts to cross over, and the only safety is in retracing her steps, her strong, truthful nature admits its mistake, and casts about for the old paths. That which has been denied her from the beginning she cannot attain. Let her recognize the limits of her possibilities, and take up her life again, planting in it the seeds that can grow and blossom in the soil.

Not in a week or a month does the rushing stream of true endeavor wash away the useless *débris* of the paltry bridges she has been building. But the sticks and straws and dead leaves vanish after a while, the swelling flood abates, and the cheerful rill sings on its way. Many duties come to hand. Her mother is more in need of entertainment, for her health is not so good and her anxiety for Perdita in no wise abates. The young couple seem to be going from city to city. There are bright, hurried notes, or longer ones with descriptions of places and amusements, but very little concerning their inner selves.

"I don't think we can expect it," says Regina with a soothing sound to her voice, that has grown tenderer of late. "Perdita simply enjoyed. She was no hand to accumulate raptures, and live them over again with her friends. And they are changing about so continually."

"But she might sometimes say she was happy."

"Let us believe that she is. She would hardly write so gayly if she were wretched. And she does speak of coming back. She will have a great deal to tell us."

There are moments when Perdita's letters stir up a longing, not of envy for that position, but the curious half wish to see these things with her own eyes, the wonder that they should come to one who passes them by so carelessly. The opportunity *has* been offered, but it is no pleasure for her to remember it now. She has chosen not to go out of her narrow round; let her accept the result with what cheer she can.

She finds, to her surprise, that the duties are many. There is little time for the *ennui* she feared, the sloth and rust of which her active soul, in its moment of dumb finality, had a horror. She can only be herself, it is true. There are many phases of usefulness that would come awkwardly to her; it would be as useless to assume them as those higher ambitions she has reached after. Beverly people have no notion of allowing her to drop out. She is too attractive.

How it is she finds a wider meaning in all these things she does not understand at first. It is the giving out rather than the continual taking in, the enjoyment in lesser forms of excellence because another soul can be made at home in it, can through it be raised to a more perfect appreciation. Even with her mother she finds the pretty stories with a gentle wholesome moral give more pleasure than the satires of Thackeray or the tense intellectualities of George Eliot. And the pretty young girls with their crude ideas and longings who have looked admiringly at Miss Halford across a great gulf, venture to draw nearer and *listen with brightening eyes to some truth delicately put*

that may grow and blossom in the coming years. Only as the other sacred love comes to inspire her with its beneficent inspirations does she understand that these results are worth more than hours of straining effort at self-perfection.

For obvious reasons she does not go to Warwick. She cannot well be spared from home, and she hears the weekly accounts in Cynthia's bright, humorous, entertaining fashion. Cynthia is a capital *raconteur*. Her rapid, vivid speech, her quick sense of mirth or pathos, and her descriptive powers that seize on all the salient points, at times quite startle Regina, who has considered her a merely clever, vivacious, and rather volatile being. Perhaps she has underrated her as much as she has over-estimated her own attainments.

The efforts at Warwick begin presently to attract attention outside of the narrow town limits. There is nothing new in the experiment, except that it has never been tried in this vicinity. These places have had a sort of shifting prosperity. In flourishing times work was brisk and people crowded in, not only from the country-places, taking many of the idle and inefficient to whom farming was a hardship, or who possessed no original faculty and could the more easily follow a machine routine. Then, in times of strikes, failures, or depression in other places, the men wandered about, "tramped" until they could find work. If it promised to be permanent they brought their wives and children, or perhaps married again without paying much attention to any law on the subject.

For some years Warwick has been tolerably prosperous. There has been no question among the employers of any moral responsibility. Several of them live in the larger cities, have other interests, and trust largely to superintendents. Others are there to make money while the enterprise pays, but to get out with the least possible loss in the hour of adversity. And still another class begin with high plans and promises, but no reserve of capital, trusting to that intangible quality called luck or chance until indebted-

ness is piled up everywhere, and ruin comes with its train of misfortunes to many. In two or three years of depression the population decreases, but now it is at the maximum. The clergy are not infrequently young men who come here as a stepping-stone to something better, and who leave the place much as they found it. The tenements grow more shabby, and as some fall into utter ruin the families crowd closer. The element of uncertainty is the cloud that shadows all prospects of improvements. No one cares beyond getting his work done.

Not that the inhabitants are miserable above all others. In fact, many of them have a serene content and take no thought for the morrow in a most literal fashion. The saloons flourish, though desperate drunkenness is not so frequent as in the larger cities. It is the sottish, unthinking, maudlin, libacious sort, who drink their beer and sit in muddled contemplation of their pipe, often on their cottage doorsteps.

The Hall has been a source of undeniable interest from the first, when there were grumblings that no more chapels or churches were needed, since the present number were never filled. Then a curious sort of distrust, as if some unknown plan was to be sprung upon them in an unguarded moment. Lastly, promises to come in and enjoy when it was in working order.

Winterburne's purpose is to have it self-sustaining as far as expenses go. There have been some subscribers of the better class, but they prefer to have the lines quite strictly drawn. So the two rooms are a necessity. The Hall is for public meetings of any kind, a very much needed institution.

The opening has been held in the Hall. A general invitation has been extended, and the clergymen of the three denominations have explained its uses and purposes. A fourth sect has a meeting on alternate Sundays. The oldest and most prosperous society, if any of them can be called really that, has an elderly clergyman who has *droned through so many years of discouragement that innovations*

have a sinister aspect to him. He has a great horror of anything radical, in his opinion it savors of atheism. While men believe nothing there is still a chance for them, he thinks; but when they come to active disbelief and irreverent questioning they are lost indeed.

But they meet in outward friendliness on this occasion. Some of the laity are invited to express their hopes and opinions, and announce that once a week the hall will be opened for political, economic, or other discussions. Altogether it is a success, and to Winterburne and the committee is given a vote of thanks. The reading-rooms are to be opened every evening, and Armitage has a project of special classes meeting on two evenings during the week.

The school has opened its doors on Monday of this eventful week. When Cynthia inspects her scholars they are indeed a motley group. Two young women with babies in their arms have brought some garments that puzzle their brains and are almost beyond Cynthia's ingenuity. She gently announces that afternoons are to be devoted to sewing. There are little children the mothers are glad to get out of the way, there are larger girls in various stages of untidiness. Regina Halford would shrink in dismay. Cynthia is amused. It is a Dickens picture, the noses of every variety, the mouths untrained in positive expression with loosely hanging lips, and eyes full of half-vacant, half-wondering expressions.

She has seen a number of them in her visits to cottages whither Miss Hilliard went on errands of kindness. Others have bobbed a short courtesy to her in the street and been rewarded with a smile, so they are not quite strangers. Some of them read very lamely, some not at all. A few have been to school, but most of the larger ones have had babies to care for since they were babies themselves. The majority of them are of old country descent.

She finds that a number of them can sing, so they have a lesson in that. There is spelling in concert, counting, adding, — all oral teaching; and noon comes quite too soon. Several have brought their luncheons, those mostly with

little sisters or brothers. Cynthia questions them in her bright, entertaining fashion, giving them some lessons in cleanliness, telling them wonderful things about their skins, their eyes, their teeth, and hair.

Just as the others straggle in Mr. Armitage ventures to present himself.

"I was anxious to know if you were appalled at the undertaking," he asks, glancing around at the motley crew. "What could you do with these — babies?" looking dismayed himself.

"The babies as you call them have one corner and some blocks. As soon as they quarrel and fight they are compelled to leave the charmed circle and sit in solitary meditation. They have had two lessons in letters and are learning to count. I have a small monitor to watch them. You see, their sisters have to bring them. We allowed for that."

He studies the bright, animated face. Is there a certain joyousness in work that he has not yet comprehended to its fullest extent?

"I supposed" — then he pauses helplessly.

"You didn't suppose they were to be clean and tidy and angelic the first day? That I was to sit among them like a queen, they obeying promptly if I so much as lifted my little finger," and she gives a dainty twirl to it as she smiles engagingly.

"I am afraid it is going to be harder on you than I thought. And you have not been used to this sort of thing."

"I am fertile in expedients. I have one womanly virtue: I practically take the shortest cut when I have anything to do, as women are credited with in their reasoning processes. Why not? Now you shall hear them sing."

Alas! they are all stricken with bashfulness. They can sing in the streets and on their own porches, perhaps a large promiscuous audience is less to be feared. They look at each other with very red faces. A few venture to follow *Miss Halford*, then drop out ignominiously, while their

companions giggle softly with their hands over their mouths.

Cynthia laughs good-humoredly. "We are all afraid of the minister." Then in an undertone, bringing her bronze brown head so near he can see the golden shimmer in a stray curl, she adds: "We are not quite up to visitors. This is a case where assurance does not really assure."

Two of the girls have sickness at home that he inquires about, and leaves Miss Halford to her own devices. They go through some calisthenics, and she gives them an easy lesson in physiology. They sew, and she reads them a story, rather broken in its serene flow by needles going astray, and thread getting into obstinate knots; hems that have an unfortunate tendency to widen out or narrow in, rather than follow the straight line of duty. Cynthia is compelled to hand her book to one of the girls and go on a tour of assistance. Then the younger ones demand her attention.

Presently two of the mothers come in, one a snug-looking Scotch woman who goes out washing to get bread for her two bairns.

"It's a godsend for such as me," she says smilingly. "If I send Nanny to the other school, I must leave Fanny at the neebors'. And she didn't seem to learn much but bad. They're so wild and rough with all the big lads."

"She can read very well," returns Miss Halford.

"But not as good as you, teacher," pipes up a complimentary voice. "She can't put as much sense in it. It do be jes' like people talkin' whin you read."

"Thank you," to little Bessy Quinn, understanding that the child has caught the meaning of emphasis. "But Nanny will soon learn to put sense in it, and I want you all to be able to read aloud at home."

"I'd like her to get a bit of sewing to her hand. She'll soon be big enough to help get her own living."

"An' sure," says the other mother, "if ye could learn *thim* to darn stockin's now! There's three lads at home *an' a man* in the mine, an' it's one's work to look after the *stockin's*."

"Yes," returns Cynthia, making a mental note of this suggestion.

They manage to sing a little song very well at the last, a street melody to be sure. Miss Hilliard drives down in time to see the motley throng dismissed, and picks up Cynthia for a drive over autumn ways, much entertained by a report of the day's proceedings.

"If there were some one who would come in and give the women a few lessons it would be a great advantage. The garments the children wear are fearful to behold! A woman was here this morning with a jacket for her boy, cut out of some old stuff, and it puzzled us both," declared Cynthia.

"But we do not expect you to embark in that business," says Miss Hilliard. "Why couldn't that be the aim of the mothers' afternoon? There ought to be some competent person found in the church capable of directing, and willing to undertake it. The talks on clothes might be as good as the talks on some other subjects. We cannot have so many burdens laid on you, even if you should develop 'various sorts of knowledge.'"

"I do not pretend to all kinds," and she smiles gayly. "How curiously ignorant the children are about the true meaning of most everything! When they stare at you wide-eyed and open-mouthed, you are lost in a sort of wonder as to how you will ever be able to arouse the dormant faculties. And there are so many provincialisms! Why, it is as good as going abroad! I shall be excellently entertained."

"Norman was afraid" —

"Oh, there is no cause for fear!" Cynthia's eyes are touched with a mirthful light. "I am resolved to earn my money by shaking the tree of knowledge vigorously. They *must* catch some fruit."

"It is not that — all things will be so different. But we mean to do our best for you;" and Miss Hilliard smiles back to the eyes looking out of the sun-beamed face, *carrying an inspiring glow.*

It is one of the soft, melancholy days. The leaves have mostly fallen. The hillsides are gray with dead grasses and branching shrubs holding out empty hands. The sky is in a haze, as if some vague trouble had come to it, and it was undecided as to what another day might bring forth.

She is very bright and adds a charm to their, of late, quiet evenings. Winterburne has been much engrossed with his books and business matters, but he puts them by and watches the face so piquant, and full of cheerful satisfactions. Yet he thinks of that other high nature, restless, self-tormenting, with its subtle pride and unanswered desires. His own hearty vitality will not allow him to drop into despondency, even where she is concerned. It is really not her time to love, and he is proud of her now that she did not take his generous proffer. If she had been kindlier, if she had softened the denial by some of the little arts the women in stories use, he would be glad to remember it, to recall a droop of the figure, a turning away of the face, a sweet pity in the eyes, a divine anguish in the voice. It would be like the lingering fragrance of flowers, given in some unguarded moment, yet not the revelation of love.

There is so much work for the strong, high-hearted man. Since he has not the key to that other soul, he cannot go fumbling around in darkened, out-of-the-way places, vainly searching. There are too many things needing to be done. Some of them may be wrong, and he will be compelled to retrace his steps, wiser by the experience. He will find new ways. Ah, if he might infuse a little of that glowing endeavor into the nature striving so blindly for what belongs to her true growth.

By the week's end Cynthia has her school in tolerable order. She takes all the amusing points home with her, the opening of the hall and the addresses, the various plans for bringing some mental electric lighting to stolid, benighted Warwick. Her bright energy lifts even Regina out of the shadow of herself, and infuses new life.

For a while every one seems much engrossed. Miss

Hilliard is kept extremely busy, but she comes up with Cynthia and helps to cheer Mrs. Halford's despondency. Winterburne has kept his own counsel too well even for his cherished sister to suspect the passage between him and Regina. All her indignation would be roused, he knows well, and in his tender soul he will not have the other blamed for what she cannot give.

CHAPTER XXII

WINTER SOWING

To do some one good and win some love. — DICKENS.

It seems to be a fact that has puzzled more than one regenerator of his species that the so-called lower classes are not easily awakened to any sense of mental improvement, hardly to greater physical comforts. They may not be satisfied with the present state of things, but they have also a wholesome fear of something worse, since most of their changes are for the worse. And Wayne Armitage finds this a great stumbling-block in his work. A number of them are easily swayed in their religious feelings, the women especially. They come to church on Sunday, and the sermon may move them emotionally. They believe the larger truths; they have, as they put it, made their peace with God, and they are quite sure of heaven at the last. The fatal lack seems to lie in the belief that they are doing their best when they do not apply one truth to their daily living. What shall arouse them, what shall bring them to the grand comprehension of true living, of real working when one comes to depend not on bread alone?

He has, in his inexperience, imagined that fine simplicity approaching grandeur among country folk who commune much with nature in her lofty splendor. It may be in purely pastoral lives, removed from the ordinary strife of business; but here they ape the sins of the cities, and seem more immovably fixed in their ways.

Instead of mountain and sky and changing seasons, they study the week's wages and how to get the greatest amount of personal indulgence without actually starving the household. They have no expectation of doing any better,

few of them have any ambition for their children. They will come up and find something to do, they will marry or go to new places and forget about their parents. The blending of different races with wild ideas of liberty grafted on the older systems of repression, the aggregation of forces that is not always assimilation, is the problem that puzzles those who take it in hand. Armitage recognizes that it is easier to slur over the tumultuous stream instead of trying to stem its mighty force, but he is a watchman on the walls. The men are rather mistrustful of the reading-rooms. To them any kind of new intelligence seems a covert attack on wages, and they are shy of it. The bosses know the most and have the power already. They have the ground fully occupied.

"And," says one of the labor apostles, "if they taught you to live on two cents a day, they'd cut you down to a penny! Things are as good now as a man can expect. Fair wages and plenty of work; we don't ask any more. What's the use of stirring people up with the old lie that there's plenty of room at the top! There isn't. It's like all wanting to be captains or generals. There's got to be a main army, and all they need is to just march steady along with plenty of rations. Keep in your place, and fight for enough rations."

That seems a common-sense view of it.

"It is not labor questions merely," Armitage explains one evening to a few who have dropped in. "It is better health, better education, higher enjoyments. Your children die off when there really is no need, your wives are ill, you drop out of the ranks in middle life, or are laid by for years before this comes, with diseases that might be averted. These, I take it, are as large questions as the manner of employment."

"Parson's goin' round to tha back slap at tha yale-house," says a brawny miner with a leer. "Say it out plump an' plain, parson. No beatin' 'bout the bush."

"Yes," says Armitage. "The ale-house, as you call it, *is one drain on all your lives, the greatest. It drags a man down, soul and body.*"

That's the rations," declares the first speaker, Baldwin by name. "I want my beer, and if I hanker after a glass of whiskey, I take that. The rich man has his champagne, his terrapin, and his canvas-back duck. A good bit of beef and bread and my beer satisfy me; and I don't believe a man gets as drunk on beer as he does on champagne. I don't believe in the poor man being crowded out of everything."

"A big question is whether the poor man can really afford it," says Winterburne in a good-humored tone. He has appeared unobserved, and stands for an instant in the doorway. They can all see his magnificent physique, even through the purple-gray clouds of smoke; his fair, healthful complexion and clear, keen, humorous eyes. "When the poor man takes upon himself the cares of home, wife, and children, has he a right to deprive them of the things he has solemnly promised them, to make of himself too often a brute and a terror? Ought he to spend his money doing this? Ought he not rather remain single if he feels he must indulge his appetite?"

"Wives doan't mind so much, measter. Tha loike a sup of summat theirsen'."

It is an understood thing that in this smoking-room the men are to have the largest liberty in expressing their opinions, that nothing is to be remembered to their detriment.

"And the rich man and his family?" interposes Baldwin with a sneer. "I think I have occasionally read in newspapers that these gentlemen are not above disturbing the domestic peace at times. There have been instances, infrequent, I will allow," with an insolent sort of nod, "when these men have run through with handsome fortunes and reduced their families to beggary."

"Well, they could not afford *that*, rich as they were. They had sacredly promised in their marriage vow that so far as in them lay, they would not, as good citizens, add to the pauper population, help to fill almshouses and perhaps insane asylums — it might be prisons. They forgot their

duty to their country as well as to their family. They put a burden on their neighbor in the shape of taxation. You cannot always afford to spend your own money. I think you have no lawful right to spend your neighbor's against his wishes and consent. And that is what every man does who goes to a prison or a poorhouse from drunkenness."

"But a little beer now and then, in moderation, isn't likely to hurt anybody. As for them that can't help making brutes and beasts of themselves" —

"Well, what are you going to do with them?"

The eyes are turned to the previous speaker. For a moment a dead silence reigns, that grows ridiculous to these people with a grim sense of humor.

"There are even such unfortunates," continues Winterburne in a tone that fixes the sympathetic quality in one's memory. "Now, my friend, what will *you* do with them? Go on filling jails and asylums?"

"You have what you want!" flings out the man angrily. "You're in luck, though Reub Finter might have a word to say."

"He has said a good many, I have observed;" and Winterburne's laugh, so pleasant, almost impersonal indeed, takes off the edge of the implication. "Finter has had a lifetime in which to make discoveries, to try experiments. He had offered his land for sale long before" —

"But, measter, you had a better head-piece an' book lore, an' a' that," subjoins one of the smelters.

"Yes, I dare say I had. I had spent some of my time studying up such matters. You see, I really cannot afford to muddle my brains drinking beer, or burn them up with whiskey. I want them for better purposes. And yet, how many of you miners know most of the indications of iron? Suppose one of you had gone over there and satisfied himself?"

"Where'd he raised his money to buy? 'Twouldn't done him no good."

"He could have informed Mr. Finter and saved him a *world of regret*, put a fortune into his hands. Come," says

Winterburne with a touch of amusement in his voice, "I dare say a great many of you are noble enough for that. You find a good deal of generosity among drinking men."

There is a general laugh at this. Winterburne is careful not to give the men too much of his society, and now he bids them good-evening. Armitage follows him through the short hall to the clearer atmosphere of the other room. A stove with two rows of mica windows exposes to view the merry leaping flames and diffuses a pervasive heat. Instead of the regulation table, there are several small ones that almost of themselves invite in a party of friends. This being on the lower floor, the corner, and having plenty of windows, is quite tempting from the outside. Yet there is not the assemblage one might reasonably expect.

Along one side there is a row of plain book-shelves partly filled. Winterburne's sudden check in ready money has compelled him to go more slowly, — indeed, in one way has been of service in enabling him to make demands upon some of the townsmen. One and another have given a subscription to a paper or magazine. Several of Armitage's friends have sent generous packages of old magazines and books that have served their purpose in other places. Winterburne has chosen his contributions in lines especially adapted to the place, — machinery, iron, and mining subjects, geology, and some farming literature interspersed. A few young men cluster about one table deep in a low-voiced discussion. Others are perusing the daily news, having no papers at home. Three tired middle-aged men have settled themselves in comfortable chairs not far from the stove and are peacefully sleeping. The men nod, cordially exchange a few words, and Armitage goes out with his friend.

"I was glad to have you come in and point the small discussion," Armitage says as they walk a short distance together. "None of *your* men were there to-night."

"It would have been the same to me. Drunkenness is the bane of this place — the incessant beer-drinking. The foreign population have brought it in mostly, though no

doubt there was a large element of cider-tipping before. If one could put something else in its place, but few things have that much pure physical comfort in them."

"Physical comfort!" Armitage expresses his surprise in his voice, his intense disgust.

"Yes. You rabid fellows don't understand this. You appeal to higher mental effort or resolve, and these poor fellows are tired after their day's work and don't want to make any effort. The saloon is warm: they can soon get their brains slightly muddled and they are happy. It is a kind of Nirvana. They are lost in that atmosphere of impersonality. They breathe, they smoke, they talk foolishly, because they do not think of what they are saying; and much of it is in one strain, they have said it over hundreds of times before. The poor tired wife at home, the sick baby, the older children running wild and getting into mischief, the inevitable collapse of the week's money before the week is half gone, all float off in a serene heaven of muddled brains. They enjoy *not* thinking; and the beer brings it about, except in these nervous, waspish temperaments, and they, I find, seldom drink beer, they want the stronger stimulants. Wasn't there some one who said a long time ago, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die'? That is their text."

"Yet we offer them the warm room, and some physical comfort you must allow," in a rather injured tone.

"I am allowing a good many things. There were quite a number of young men in the room to-night, I observed. They will be trained to do a little thinking, and then it will not seem such a hardship to them. When you once interest a man in real knowledge you have won half the battle, whether it be in mechanics, history, or citizenship. And our hope *is* in the young. If you save even ten of them in a year it wouldn't be a bad year's work, Armitage. And the young ones are more likely to go on teaching, you see."

Armitage remembers the Master who had twelve disciples for his three years' teaching. He had sown *beside all waters, and perhaps some of it returned to other hands.*

"I'm not discouraged," declares Armitage in a bright tone. "Only it seems a little showing for almost two months. So many came in first. And the saloons are very wide awake. Davis goes down to Labaugh's and plays the cornet nearly every evening."

"They mistrust something. There will be a call in the spring to decide whether the saloons shall rule us or not. But we want to keep as quiet as possible about it until just at the last. Bring out all the sensible every-day arguments, but don't bristle up with compulsion. I don't just see why myself, but when you tell a man he shall not drink he is very apt to go off and get blind drunk. If you tell him he shall not steal or murder, or set his neighbor's house on fire, he doesn't make such a tremendous protest. Perhaps because he knows the law will take hold of him, but it really does not rouse the devil in him to such an extent."

"Of course a man considers he has a right to do what he likes with his own body."

"But when he understands that all things are possible, but all things are not expedient, not wise; that they bring a long list of evils in their train; when he is really educated to respect his body as much as he would any other rare and complicated machine, and learns that its repairs are extremely difficult, he must have a greater care for it."

"Put soul in as well, Winterburne."

"There are many bodies with no souls to speak of," and Winterburne laughs softly. "And there are souls that outweigh the body, but you do not find them down Front or Water Streets. Am I horribly unorthodox? Now and then, in times of great religious awakening, men leap to a live knowledge of their souls, but oftener you get at them through their bodies."

Armitage sighs. He could wish his friend a little less materialistic. Yet the larger part of experience is with him.

After a few more suggestions they part. Armitage returns to the rooms, and talks a while with the young men.

It is a sharp, crisp December night, but Winterburne strides cheerfully over the bleak road, a pleasant enough walk in summer. If he means to remain here, and he almost knows he will for some time to come, he must see about having a house more to his liking. There are so few pretty spots in Warwick, unless you do go on the outskirts, and that with the two of them would be very lonely. Mrs. Prall in a certain way is company, and Mr. Prall is useful in an emergency. They might be worse off. But his ideal house is spacious and full of people, a House Beautiful for the entertainment of pilgrims. Alice would enjoy it. Cynthia would be delightful. Is there any one else to set in this "large room" who might dispense its bounties with a royal hand?

He sighs a little. It will take a fortune to do that, and fortunes are not made in a day, even if one does hold in his hand some of the best gifts of Providence.

The eastern end of the house is brightly lighted up and down. Mrs. Prall occasionally makes an estimate of the cost of useless lamps — gas is not to be even dreamed of. But when Winterburne comes in sight, as now, the cheerful glow warms his very soul.

Cynthia and Alice are deep in Christmas gifts for the school children. Lois has lent a useful hand: ornament is clearly out of her line, and rather beyond her principles. She and Cynthia have had a spirited discussion about hoods and mittens. She would fain have them sensible colors, good browns and deep blues; and Cynthia brings in bright blues and pretty reds for the hoods and the small people's mittens.

"There's enough that's dull and gray in their poor lives," cries the animated girl. "And you want to give them what their mothers would not be likely to buy. All children love show, unless it's some of the abnormal Puritan children," and she laughs. "You'll find them gathering the gayest flowers and the most scarlet autumn leaves, and sitting in the strongest sunshine without a thought of horrible freckles."

Lois gives her little snort of disapproval, but knits away cheerily.

There are pretty cards, a few books, and dearest of all to a child's heart, lace bags holding candies, so open-meshed indeed that there can be no doubt about the candies, to the naked eye, even at a distance. Alice and Cynthia have been tying them with bright bits of ribbon, and tossing them lightly into a basket.

For the school has proved a success. The attendance varies, to be sure. There are washing-days, when some of the elder girls have to stay at home and assist. There are sick mothers and fathers and babies.

"There used to be a fallacy that the poor people always had robust health, and that the gifts of the gods were pretty well equalized, the sickness going to the rich who really *can* afford it better," moralizes Cynthia one evening. "But I should say the poor had it all, and that it is a pretty unhealthy world, even in country places. Such horrible colds as they have, and one would think they must be used to as many changes of temperature as there are smells in Cologne."

"They scarcely understand any of the laws of health, and they have none of the conveniences."

"Plenty of fresh air," says Cynthia sententiously. "Even at night it must sweep through some of their houses."

"I have heard that it was possible to have too much even of a good thing," says Winterburne; "but in some of the streets and yards the air cannot be very pure, unless the world is frozen up. And just now we cannot begin our model houses, more's the pity."

"Because Jasper Bradley is spending the money?" Cynthia laughs with a rather sharp significance. "This is not the greatest good to the greatest number."

Winterburne shrugs his shoulders.

"Still, there is one comfort," amends Cynthia generously. "Perdita is in it."

But now it is all Christmas preparations. Even the

slow-going churches, with the old bit of Puritan leaven in them, fading out more slowly in these distant country-places, lend a rather reluctant hand since Armitage with his wider training and richer social impulses leads the van. Already there is a kind of vivid undercurrent that sways perceptibly.

Winterburne chaffs Cynthia a little, and then sits in thought. He has been considering some sort of family reunion; but the Halfords cannot come here, and nothing has been said about inviting them to Beverly. He has seen Regina once only since that miserably unfortunate day, a Sunday afternoon when he drove up for his sister and Cynthia. They were all friendly, Mrs. Halford delighted. It is a pleasure for him to look upon Regina; indeed, there is the same loyal, obstinate faith in his soul that some time the differences between them will vanish by an occult touch. While she has no lover he will be content. Indeed, he is hardly ready for her yet. The lines of one of his favorite poems come back to him on this occasion: —

“Much is to learn, and much to forget,
Ere the time be come for taking you.”

With all his planning he can invent no friendly Christmas festivities, and to-day he has learned it would be of no avail as a business journey is imperative.

“Who is to get *your* Christmas in shape?” he asks rather humorously, studying the bright, eager face.

“Mine?” She flushes warmly.

“Yes. I cannot keep it here with you” —

“But I must return on Christmas eve — I really must,” she interrupts. “We shall have our distribution of gifts on Friday afternoon, and I can reach home at the usual hour. What are you going to do?” glancing from one to the other.

“I shall have to go away. And I was thinking — I might take you and Alice to Philadelphia and leave you *there for a few days*, hunt up those Stafford Bradley people

to entertain you while I went about my business. Couldn't you be spared? Alice would be delighted, I know. Look at her face!"

It is a very unusual bloom for her. She often flushes delicately, but this has a joyous brightness that is startling. Cynthia studies it with pleasure, then her own smile fades slowly.

"It would be delightful, superlatively so, but I cannot accept — indeed I cannot. I owe this week to those at home — it will be my first holiday, and you can see yourself it would look cruel to go off pleasuring" —

"You have earned a rest. Cynthia, you hardly realize what your energy and eagerness and gay spirits have done for us! I only wish Armitage had a little more of your temperament. He is too strenuous; he wants everything too exact in the beginning; his endeavors are too great. And you ought to be rewarded in some way" — he observes her with a curiously abstracted air.

"But you *must* see," she begins, her breath coming quickly, while vivid, wavering lights go up and down her face, "you know yourself that it would be unkind, positively selfish, to leave mother and Regina alone."

"And we couldn't whisk your mother off" — he gives a short, interrogative laugh.

"Ah, if we could! If it were only summer!" Cynthia gives a lightsome ripple. "But you do see, both of you? And it was so lovely, 'so perfectly lovely,' in the language of sixteen, for you to think of it!" and she turns her glowing face to Winterburne, her long dark eyes softly luminous. "Of course you will go?" to Alice.

"Of course. She has no remedy but to obey her tyrant. And I think she can furbish up a little business. Only — you two would have been such good company."

"I understand," Alice Hilliard subjoins in an appreciative tone. "You are very generous to think first of the others. I wish you could go. There may come some future occasion" —

"Really, it is a plain duty, not even up to a point of sentiment," cries Cynthia brightly.

"I hope you will have a pleasant time" —

"And lots of copy-book platitudes," she interrupts saucily, "the reward of duty well done and all that! Much more likely I shall sit envying you two all the pleasant times, with that double-faced nature we all possess!"

She does not look as if there were much envy in her wholesome temperament.

They finish up the Christmas gifts and go to bed. Her room adjoins Miss Hilliard's, is small with no convenience for fire, and is heated from the larger room, the door being always open. They linger over the sleepy blaze until the last moment, then Alice kisses her with unwonted tenderness.

"If it only had been possible to go with you," the younger girl says, and flushes ever so slightly.

Alice looks out from her pillow on the great log, gray here and there with patches of ash around which sinuous little spires of flame run and curl and dazzle. Something has entered her mind with a more than vague impression. She is extremely fond of Cynthia. What if, in an allusive way, Norman has presented his wishes and Regina has frowned upon them, as is possible in such matters, without the words on either side that are awkward to remember. Just a glance of the eye, a turn of the head: it would not take much, she thinks, to deny him. She cannot see that Regina ever gave him any encouragement. She feels affronted that any woman should be so blind as to pass him by indifferently, yet she is secretly glad he has escaped. Regina is a much nobler girl than she at first fancied, but between them would always stretch an intangible gulf. If it had come to pass she would have done her best, of course, to love the woman who took a sister's place. But now she need not make the effort. She can admire Regina in her own sphere in an unstinted manner; for she is generous, and there are many graces and charms to the beautiful girl.

If sweet, impulsive, sensible, healthy-toned Cynthia *should prove attractive*, and they will be thrown so much

together! She has a shrewd, intuitive wisdom that would be invaluable; she could so easily be trained to all the aims and purposes of his life; indeed, she has found the grand secret of all earnest lives, to be useful to their kind. Her temper is genial, sunny, and frank, but the wise toning of experience will remedy the few infelicities. She will not have the elegance and high-bred air of Regina, but will not Norman be more comfortable without it?

Regina has been invited to the school festivities; but she has previously accepted another engagement that her mother insisted upon, to a dinner at Judge Disbrowe's. She has declined so many invitations, she has had a feeling that in their altered circumstances she would not even go out half way to meet pleasures. This is one of the grand Beverly entertainments. Mrs. Disbrowe is a charming and cultured woman, the judge's second wife, and there are two daughters by the earlier marriage. It is termed a dinner because the dinner comes first, but there is a delightful dance afterward for the younger people. Mrs. Disbrowe has called herself, and made a point of Regina's acceptance. She has a cousin who is an ardent admirer of beauty, and who does not need to marry money. He has met Miss Halford, and expressed a decided appreciation of her dignity and elegance. And Mrs. Disbrowe likes to have her companies graced with beauty.

But the little entertainment passes off delightfully. Cynthia has her room crowded with spectators, and the thanks in some instances move her to tears, they are so filled with untutored gratitude. She has decided to go home at once, for the winter days are short. Winterburne hands her a package of Christmas gifts as he puts her on the train. It will be quite a long absence, and the farewell is earnest in its friendliness.

"But then, you and Alice will be away," she says, with a touch of consolation. "Give everything a double look for me."

She peers out of the window for a last glance, as the tall figure strides manfully up the street. There are so few

men like him — has he grown larger and richer, or is it because she knows him better? She smiles as she thinks of the little parlor, and the rather quiet young man who used to look at Regina, who admired her of course. Well, in some ways it has been an intense admiration. If Regina had liked him! How abominably she has behaved on a few occasions that Cynthia can recall. Yes, if she *had* cared for him —

He can talk enough now, though he has spells of dreamy abstraction; business affairs, no doubt. And he remembers so much of that old life. Regina has such a prejudice against it! what would she say if she knew they two talked it over?

"I remember a curious kind of blue dress your sister used to wear," he has said. "It had steely lights in it, and gave her an inwrapped air, as if she belonged to another world than this. It had white laces at the throat and wrists."

"That," comments Cynthia reflectively; — "oh, that was an electric blue cashmere. It *was* a wonderful color. Yes, it was very becoming. And Regina is a striking sort of girl. She never breaks her fine contours by any furbelows. I think she understands the harmonious lines she is always talking about. But when one is really handsome" —

"She would look lovely in velvet," he says, with a soft sigh kept well under his breath.

"It's too late for us to cry after velvet gowns," laughs Cynthia merrily.

She doesn't ever repeat these bits of confidences. She knows Regina would be panic-stricken if once aware she just was even in danger of being intimately discussed. And now Cynthia is in such a delighted state of mind herself. She has her fifty dollars and the *aplomb* of success; she is really *liked*. Some of the mothers have begun to confide their troubles to her, and they all run in the same strain. The husband is good enough until he gets an over-bit of drink in him. The son was such a fine lad, and never gave *her* a hard word until he took to the saloons. She doesn't

wonder Armitage is so bitter against it; but Winterburne is never bitter. All kindly and generous thoughts have such an authority over his soul.

It is dusk as she walks up the street, past the park where the leafless, long-armed trees shiver in the blast; and the evergreens huddle together with a sense of warmth in numbers alone, as they stand in darkening groups. Here is the cosey cottage — she shudders as she gives a thought to the lonely ruins of Bradley House. And where will Perdita keep her Christmas?

Mrs. Halford is delighted to see her; these Friday evenings are little festivals of entertaining gossip, and cheer her up immeasurably. She is not really ill, indeed she has improved a little of late; but she has dropped down, as people sometimes do at middle life, and needs that some one should poke the embers of interest into a continual blaze.

The Disbrowes' carriage is to be sent for Regina at seven, sharp. She is to wear her black-lace dress, and to have pink roses. But she doesn't need to dress just yet, so they inspect the Christmas gifts, from Miss Hilliard of course. Two exquisite volumes of poems for Regina and a lovely handkerchief, fine as a cobweb. To Mrs. Halford a handsome set of table-napery, and a pair of gloves, not too costly for the giver or the recipient.

"You can carry your handkerchief to-night, and christen it," laughs Cynthia. "We shall not have many gifts, I suppose."

Still, a few have been sent in, among them some elegant flowers. And they are to take their Christmas dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Sayre.

"How delightful! I was wondering if we wouldn't be awfully stupid. Mr. Winterburne and Alice start for Philadelphia at nine to-morrow morning. He goes on some important business farther away, and they invited me" — Cynthia colors with conscious pleasure.

"O Cynthia! And you *could* have gone" — Regina glances at her with upbraiding eyes.

"No — I couldn't. I must fix up my clothes, and get rested for a new campaign. And it would have been just horrid to leave you and mother alone; and for various reasons. Wait until summer, and we'll all go off together."

Regina stoops and kisses her, as she sits on the stool on which her mother's feet are resting, her arms folded in her mother's lap.

"Oh!" she cries suddenly, "I forgot to mention *my* Christmas. It is a very pretty desk, — cherry and brass, and handsomely appointed. But I couldn't well bring that home. I'll write you some notes on the paper," and she laughs pleasantly.

Regina looks extremely handsome as she comes downstairs, gloves in hand, and a fleecy white wrap on her arm. If Winterburne could see her now! Has she not changed mysteriously? That he should have this peculiar adoration for her does not in the least affect Cynthia. Hers is not a jealous nature; it has more breadth than intensity. She would have all the world happy; but she has learned in this brief while, that all are not to be made happy in one way, and that there is a great deal of yet undiscovered joy in the world in spite of all the sorrow.

Either she has grown more tolerant of Regina's sweeping beliefs and theories, or the elder has toned them to softer vibrations. She finds a new charm in Beverly. The little restrictions and formalism that used to bore her so have a new meaning. She is doing the same work on a lower scale, — training the ignorant and uncouth to the usages of beauty and harmony. There must be a certain order. She could not devote her whole life to the pursuit of personal pleasure and advancement; but these exclusive souls serve to keep up a kind of beacon light, like vestals with their sacred lamps. It is better than to utter the old cry that all is vanity.

The only trouble is that the days go too fast. Mrs. Halford would fain keep Cynthia, with her uplifting brightness.

"It seems to me that we have never done Cynthia quite *justice in all things*," she says softly to Regina.

CHAPTER XXIII

WITH EARNEST HANDS

The web of our life is of mingled yarn, good and ill together.

— *All's Well That Ends Well.*

THE small current of improvement at Warwick is not allowed to flow serenely through flowering meads. When there is so much room for all kinds of work, it puzzles Cynthia that any one should, instead of taking hold in earnest, try to turn the poor little stream aside, to double it back and forth, place obstructions in the way, and prevent it from making any real advance.

For Warwick gets in a strange ferment. The solid, slow-going element, the people who have lived through generations of slothful indifference, look askance at new ideas. They are untried; they may be worse. It is all on account of the foreign population coming in; and why should any one do so much for these factory and mill hands and rough iron-workers? It was not done for us, they cry.

Even obstinately good people can block reformations. If you have improvements, taxes must be higher. If you have streets cleaned up and repaired, some one must pay for it. That there will be a gain in health to quite offset the other expense does not penetrate their slow-moving brains. If all this rabble had not come in, if things could be as they were thirty or forty years ago!

The question of liquor-drinking comes to be largely discussed. There is a certain arbitrariness in taking away from a man the power to do what he likes. The sturdy old men who have lived through an era of moderate drinking, on certain home-brewed compounds, blame it not so much to the material as the innate determination of the hands to ~~be~~ drunk at all hazards, the vice they have brought from

the old country. Because they have vices, let them go on in their evil ways.

Armitage teaches and preaches in his high, resolute fashion, and believes devoutly in "Acts of Congress."

"We must be our own Congress," says Winterburne.

Old Dr. Farrand, the patriarchal clergyman of the town, is roused by his young brother's earnestness. The reading-room gains a little; there is talk now of a gymnasium. Armitage preaches on certain subjects given out beforehand, sensational say the sober-going people.

"We must have a revival of religion," declares Dr. Farrand, and forthwith a house to house visitation, and unusual efforts are put forth. All these new beliefs have a dangerous look to him, and he exhorts people to turn to the good old ways.

"One would almost think I was an infidel or a socialist, and held the most reprehensible ideas," says Armitage to Cynthia one mild afternoon, as they are walking out together. "If people will come to hear me I shall not beg them to stay away."

His fair face is flushed and his brows knit in indignant fervor.

She smiles. "I begin to think people do not go back far enough," she says in her bright, inspiring tone. "It is so simple when you *do* get to the foundation. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these,' and they go away and forget *what* is to be done. It is not splitting an argument as to in what manner the work shall be carried on, it is feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and in prison, the improvident, the wicked, the people who protest against care and cleanliness. There must have been a great many of them *then*, do you not think?" smiling up in his face as the wind blows her bright hair about her broad temples. "It must have taken a great deal of patience and love to go around even then—I suppose it didn't ever get quite around."

For it seems to Cynthia, as much as she likes Armitage, and they are all very close friends, he too wants to pull the

stream of goodness in the channel he has walled up. "Seek first the kingdom of heaven," and the rest will be added. But must not the seekers really know what the kingdom of heaven may be to them?

"But it is love, all of it, divine love." He looks at her in perplexity.

"Then ought not love really to be made lovely?"

"I — I don't understand you."

"I'm afraid heaven is too far off for most people. They live and suffer here, their wants are all so intensely personal, and they come after a while to have a vague trust in God because he is pitiful, and a desire for heaven because it is rest; but they keep it a long way off. They are not going to die until the far end of life — it always looks so far off when one is well and strong. And I've remarked too," with a curious inward smile that just softens her face, "that the sick are always anxious to get well, and the old people are in no hurry to die."

"Well — and then?"

"I suppose they want a good deal of *living* grace. That would bring the other when the time of dying came. I think sometimes if people put the best and sweetest side of religion out — if every one who really believed lived up to the wisest and truest that they do know, and to the 'inasmuch' —"

"But they won't let you do for them oftentimes," he cries irritably. "They will have none of your wisdom."

"It was so a long while ago, you remember. It requires a great deal of hopeful patience. And people must come to see for themselves. They look too much through other eyes. They go away and forget. Oh," she cries with an abrupt laugh that is in no sense amusement, — "I can't preach a bit! I can only teach some of the plain little things. But it seems to me that everybody is trying to do too much."

The revival is a kind of old-fashioned factor after all. The women as usual do most of the church-going. A few of the braver ones go down in town and try to rouse up the

tired, anxious women and the stolid men who cannot at the first talk be convinced that smoking a pipe of tobacco is a deadly sin. Old Dr. Farrand denounces his enemies — all new ways and methods are comprehended in this — quite as vigorously and picturesquely as the Psalmist. The work that is not directly of God cannot prosper.

Jason Prall is a subject of interest to the opposite side of the house. He goes to church and listens attentively. But he still waits for his call.

"Fer I don't see how a man kin git religion athout a call," he persists. "He must feel some sort o' drawrin'. An' I've jest prayed for that thair call fer nigh onto thirty year."

"And you really don't expect to be saved?" questions Lois Strong with an amused contempt.

"Well — I can't say that nuther. 'Tain't fer a poor human creetur to hurry God's ways. An' one don't want to make any mistake an' be self-deceived."

Still, there are some gathered in. There is a deeper feeling of responsibility.

Yet out of it all, outside of Winterburne's manly, honest work, when the election comes around, since the party in ascendancy desires no restriction upon the liquor traffic, no one is brave enough to go beyond party lines. True, the saloons have been making strenuous efforts. They have left no stone unturned. Personal liberty has been one of their watchwords, — the right of a man to eat and drink what he liked. "Of course, it would be just as reasonable to pass a law that a workingman should not be allowed roast-beef. If you can do one you can do the other," says the apostle of liberty. The religious impression is sneered at.

One evening this kind of amusement receives a sudden and unlooked-for check.

"See 'ere," says the brawny miner Braxton, "tha' can't laff at tha young pairson afore me! Happen he may be gotten idees o' meat an' drink, what wi' ee pairson's fastin' *ower much*, an' liken' to be bossen common folk, but he

be a rare good un! When my lad an' tha two little lasses were down wi' tha fever he coum in tha day an' staid a' tha night. An' tha missus at tha school fetched 'em kittles o' things my missus never seed afore, rare good too. An' them gells has l'arnt wisdom eno' to set up schools theirsens, an' can darn tha feyther's hosen ekil to tha outd missus! Happen pairson may b'lieve tha's pison in tha beer and rum — he ha' neever drink it eno' to know, but he wonna be faulted whilst I be here!" and Braxton brings his fist down upon the table like a sledge-hammer. "Happen a man can eat and drink as he loikes, he may think as he loikes as weel!"

"Well," says Dale to his young partner a few mornings after the election, "I hope now you're satisfied to leave the riff-raff alone! You see, there's no use trying to make them over!"

"I don't feel so awfully discouraged as you may think," confesses Winterburne cheerily. "The fact remains that it has opened a way for discussion. So many of the men have preserved an obstinate, dogged silence on the subject, and now they are quite willing to talk, in the exultation of their victory. One can slip in an argument as one sometimes drives a nail in a weak place, and it holds. No, I'm not going to give up. We must work the harder."

"You must love to throw away good labor."

"I do not believe any earnest endeavor for the right is ever thrown away."

"If I had my way," says Graniss, coming forward, "I'd put an end to it in this fashion. I wouldn't keep a man who drank to the neglect of his business. I'd excuse him for the first offence, maybe the second. Then I'd discharge him. If all the employers would join in some such measure" —

"It would shut up the saloons;" and Winterburne smiles cordially over at his partner. "They're ready enough to trust a man when he has work, or is likely to get it. If everybody else had as much confidence in him!"

"They could take their choice. They'd still be free

agents ;" and he nods his head satirically. "There'd be no compulsion."

"Meanwhile, what would the family do? The wife and children would have to support him, or he must turn tramp or criminal. Have you a right to let him loose that way?"

"Oh!" remarks Dale, "some one else might hire him."

"Not if the employers banded together. And in positions of responsibility or high trust, or where lives may be at stake, I think no one has any right to put a man who drinks occasionally. When the infrequent 'larks,' and 'tears,' and 'good times' are made quite as disreputable as the every-day drinking, there will be a change all around. When the man who sells rum is not esteemed as highly as the man who sells bread, when the brewer and distiller are not put on a par with all other manufacturers, even the poor muddled drunkard may come to see that sobriety is really a virtue, one of the economic virtues. But the poor fellow bids fair to be crushed by the nether millstone before he is rescued."

"All those folks down there," Dale nods his head with an irritated fling, "have coddled up Braxton and two or three of the others that had sickness this winter. And you see what a little effect it has had upon them."

"There was a wise man once who recommended that the Christian virtues should be used toward the indifferent and the ungrateful. The Gentiles, he told his followers, knew enough to be kindly to those who treated them well."

Dale flushes angrily. He has been one of the steady attendants at the revival, since it was in his church. He has, to be sure, had no great faith in it. And he has simply refrained from joining his party on this question, he has made no stand against it. He, too, fancies he believes in impartial rights for all men.

The next step Winterburne takes is to purchase a strip of land that has been lying waste for a long while. Since there seems no possibility of iron in it, the sale passes unquestioned. There is space for twenty houses. A building association has been discussed, and a meeting is called to

consider the feasibility of forming one. Or Winterburne will build the houses and sell them on very moderate instalments.

On the whole, it is rather amusing. Winterburne looks upon a property owner as a sort of ballast to the place. But there is the other side—in dull times a man cannot take his house on his back and seek fresh fields of labor. Neither can he sell.

"How many of you," asks Winterburne, "have been in this town five years?"

It would seem mostly all of them had.

"Then you ought to feel some pride in its improvement. Dull times may come, to be sure, but they seldom last very long. And if you have your house you can certainly weather it better. You can leave your families in security while you tramp for work. You save up something where, on the other hand, you would be likely to spend it all."

"It looks very fair," says a small, sharp-faced man, taking the floor; "but when you're fast this way, and the bosses want to give a cut at wages, you daren't stand out, for fear you'd lose your house. They get the upper hand of you everywhere. And if your house isn't paid for and you're out of work, there's a sharp foreclosure, and you lose what you've put in it."

"If any man chooses to build one of these houses or buy it after it is built, and any misfortune happens to him, the association will pay him exactly what it cost. The interest will have gone for rent. So he can be sure of a purchaser. And if he can sell it for more than that, he has the opportunity," announces Winterburne.

He well knows he will be back of everything, although one of the proprietors of the lumber-mill has signified his willingness to take a share in the experiment. Everything is here on the spot, which is an advantage.

In a fortnight several who have taken options will hand in their decision. Meanwhile, as it is coming pleasant weather and there will be little frost to interfere, Winterburne and Mr. Cresson start at once at ten of the cottages.

Two are to be built together, with separate gardens on the outside of each. Cresson considers it rather foolish to waste the land.

"It seems to me a bit of garden strip is a wonderful interest to womenkind, if it cannot attract a man's attention. Flowers and shrubbery add so much cheer," subjoins Winterburne.

There is to be nothing pretentious about them. Six nice, cheerful rooms with plenty of windows, built so as to keep out the bleak winds of winter, and a pretty porch across the front, divided by a railing, so that neither family can interfere. The other lots are to be partitioned in the same manner. The curious throng linger to inspect the foundations, — women with babies in their arms, and little children clinging to their skirts.

Dale meanwhile is putting his energies and what money he can spare on the home of his old age at Cedar Grove. This is straight up the river, where the bank has washed away by slow degrees and left a little cove. The outlook is really beautiful. The river and the unequal shore over opposite, here a mass of frowning rocks, there a long ascent of wooded hills, and a vista of half-hidden villages breaking the solitude.

If they cannot reach their point in one way, the two men most interested decide that all methods shall be tried before they are vanquished. Armitage persuades some young fellows to try the gymnasium. There is to be a boat-club also. And Winterburne with much shrewd management gathers the musical talent of the little town together, and they come once a week for a practise. Davis, the cornet player, is persuaded to join them. Winterburne holds to his idea of putting wholesome pleasures in the place of those that can only degrade the soul and body. There are not the variety of temptations that a large city offers, but for that reason the one has much greater influence.

Armitage has been studying himself, his friend, and *Miss Halford* as well. To him "being all things to all

men" has looked heretofore a rather sophistical problem, from which he has shrunk with a sense of vague Jesuitism. But he comes to read the Apostle's reason — "if haply he may save some." It is not lowering his soul to weak subterfuges, not putting a possible evil in the place of a grander virtue, it is only passing by in self-denial some cherished ideals. It is learning that more generous conformity to the Divine Will, that courage taking in the irritating and unthankful, not only living close to the Eternal goodness, but reaching out for others, gathering the fragmentary truths that could best penetrate here and there, and moulding them into a braver completeness, realizing the awful poverty of weaker souls and their few poor resources, and coming to have a tenderer patience with God's creatures.

The sudden "boom," it seems so, but it has been a twelvemonth in preparation, stirs Warwick as with the forces of electricity. Some of the men who have drifted along in the old rut for years awake to possibilities that overthrow their old modes of reasoning. They have hitherto refused to move with the world, now they can hardly stride fast enough.

"I don't know but you have evoked one of the old demons the Germans used to let out of a bottle," says Armitage one day. "How will you get him back when you want to restrain him? Everybody is going wild about buying land. They seem to think all the ground left in the world is in this little town of Warwick, and they must secure it at once."

Dale has accused him in a less mild way of sending everybody into a fever of speculation.

The club — it is a club now and meets in the upper hall; some of the smokers keep their pipes out of their mouths for an hour's talk — discusses a few of the questions of material prosperity, of work and wages, of the poverty of the poor, mentally, physically in their ailing children and less rugged physique; and at other times some of the great moral questions. During one of these, when the welfare of the multitudes of workers is under

consideration, the old argument of the luxury of the few comes up. The fine houses, the costly living, the expensive pleasures, of those who grind their wealth out of the laborer, leaving him but a mere pittance.

Two or three look askance at Winterburne. He rises with a good-humored interest, and his smile seems to be the oil upon the seething waters of passion.

"There is one class you have omitted," he begins in a clear, unperturbed voice. "I think we agree about the speculator, and I am willing to admit that the manufacturer is too often grasping and selfish. But of your own free will you help to enrich another class, and find no fault when the liquor dealer lives in elegance on your money. He has his yachts, his summer houses, his journeys, his horses, his men and maids, and all his expensive pleasures, to which you contribute cheerfully, even to sacrificing the welfare of your own family, your health, and your prospects in life. He influences your votes — you are not even free agents in that. He speculates as well. He sells you all manner of frightfully adulterated stuff, and you make no complaint. Now, when you are so generous to him, do you not think it is only fair to show *us* a little of this large charity once in a while? If I save my money and buy an iron mine or start a mill or a furnace, I am dealing it out again. Why, I even think sometimes that *I* am helping the rumseller along because I am willing to pay enough wages for you to hand over a part to him."

A laugh goes round the room. He stands there so compact, so spirited, so utterly fearless, his hair tumbled about his white forehead, his eyes shining in the splendid light of health and energy, his clear-cut face with its winning smile, and not a soul can controvert him.

He has driven his nail, and they can hammer it down at their leisure. It cannot be pulled out. He prefers that they shall discuss it among themselves, so he bows graciously and withdraws.

"It is a pity you couldn't have made that speech before *the election*," says Armitage.

"It might have fallen flat, then. I wasn't so much in the active movement, though I did a good deal of very earnest work. I told Dale I wasn't discouraged. Five years from this time you will find a different sentiment in this town. No one has really desired its welfare. I'm not sure but people in general fight harder for their theories than the beneficent application of them. The people *must* come to them. A truth cannot change or be altered. Yet some of us to-day wouldn't fight for the things for which our forefathers shed their blood heroically. They believed them high and solemn truths; doubtless they were to them. But they do not look so to us. Is it because we have a wider knowledge, have come to that 'better way' shown eighteen hundred years ago? Yet we don't crowd into it, do we?" and he laughs out of the large and generous impulses of his soul, the patient awaiting.

"No, we do not jostle each other much," returns Armitage. "If we only were as earnest for the benefit of our fellow-creatures as we think we are!" and he sighs. "Yet there must be systems" —

"No fear of our running short of them. Very few are altogether perfect. But those that contribute most to the moral force and the happiness of others seem to me better worth following. Perhaps our age is not as grandly heroic as some that have preceded us, but *I* like living now. And I like the work of to-day. Still, it cannot all be finished in my time; that is one of the limitations I recognized at the outset.

"It is odd," he says a moment later, as his friend makes no reply, is indeed revolving many ideas in his mind, "that Miss Halford goes so quick to the very best there is in systems, and has that large adaptiveness without confusion. Most teachers would be hopelessly muddled, doing as she does. It puzzles me sometimes that she can so quickly discern the capabilities of a child, and the grand secret of her success is that she never sets a child about doing that for which it has not the slightest capacity. There is so much wasted force in the world, so many people doing the wrong

thing;" and now he sighs a little. "And the industrial problem swings between making men mere machines, or giving them the wider self-interest in all employments; wider interest in the true life of manhood and womanhood. Cynthia amused us one evening by saying there were two or three girls who actually couldn't learn to darn stockings. One of these is her best monitor, a girl who can easily be trained for a teacher. It would be a manifest injustice to insist that she should spend half her time over the stockings, but I suppose most of the mothers would. Miss Halford can fill a big space somewhere, when the right master comes to hand."

Winterburne finds the two girls enjoying themselves in the cosey workroom. Alice has laid by her tasks and is lounging in the reclining chair. Perhaps it is the crimson pillow back of her, but it seems to him she is paler, longer, and slimmer than her usual wont. She has not been out so much of late. There is so little to explore around this town, even in the magnificent springtime.

Cynthia is in the midst of a bit of experience at once amusing and pathetic.

"Go on," exclaims Winterburne, deliberately picking out the softest and largest rocking-chair in the room. He has a tremendous love of comfort. To him the continual petty denials of self, with no ultimate purpose, seem alike useless and reprehensible, like a wasp buzzing around a room when there is a wide out-of-doors.

Cynthia proceeds. Her long eyes, that look so indolent and see so much, are brimming with amusement. Her cheeks are like the heart of a rose, her complexion has a peachy bloom, her lips express every emotion, are *riant* with a marvellous capacity of adding just the right force or drollery to her words. She is not handsome, but there are times when she is oddly pretty and always attractive. Her voice has such a rapid ripple, changes so quickly, is soft, passionate, tender, and pathetic as her subject requires. She could hold an audience, he thinks.

"Cynthia," he says, when she has ended, "it would make

one of those dramatic little stories of common life that appeal so to most hearts. Why don't you write it?"

"I wonder if I could! I wish," she says in a kind of vague fashion, that shows how far her thoughts have travelled, "I wish Regina was a — had a genius."

"Regina is too intense. Her world would be made of the exceptional natures. She cannot easily understand what the great majority of the world needs, cannot accept the every-day standard. Her attempts would be a battle and a defeat, for she would be too thoroughly, bitterly true to add the glow of romance."

Cynthia glances at him. His eyes have wandered past her into a mysterious world; it is the mood she has surprised occasionally, and has a subtle reference to Regina. Something a little more might make it love. Regina will never hold out that animating, vivifying, leaping touch of flame to kindle his soul, any soul. Is there some fatal restraining influence holding her in its chilly grasp.

"Yes," subjoins Alice, rousing herself a little, and softly thrilling to the consciousness on which she is founding a tender romance, that he must be sure Regina will disregard if proffered; "yes, Cynthia. Why haven't we thought of that before? You can put pictures into words, if you cannot make them with a pencil."

"I don't know." Cynthia gives a slow, doubtful laugh.

It is through Armitage that Cynthia hears of Winterburne's successful sally. Indeed, it is through him that she has come to understand so much of the real man.

"Some of them didn't take it kindly; it's odd what sensitive feelings they have for a rumseller. But Forbes, the father of those dreadful twin boys, you know, seemed tremendously struck by the fact. His weekly bill at the saloon often runs up to three dollars of his twelve, and he's a pretty sober fellow, too. One doesn't often hear of his going on a tear, as the men call it. So he's promised his wife two dollars of it to put by toward *her* house and carriage and all that; and he laughed a little over it. 'I've come to the conclusion,' said he, 'that I can't afford

to help so many men to fortunes, and as this one doesn't do anything for my advancement or my home comfort, I'll lop him off first. To think there's double the money spent for beer and such stuff that there is for bread, and people starving!' He pointed it rather more forcibly than I approve of;" and Armitage gives a humorous half-smile.

All these bits of interest go up to Beverly tinted and textured by Cynthia's bright modes of speech. Regina considers them afterward. Is it possible that her generalizations have come so wide of the mark, that when she considered herself wise in the lore of discrimination, she had merely followed out a few dogmatic principles arbitrarily laid down by those who had only taken one side of human nature into account, who were fallible, who might be ignorant as well? For her system has allowed of no generous growth and development; it has had the rigidity of caste. That when people appear content with some walk of life they can have aspirations for no other; that the brevet rank belongs only to the favored few whose noble dissatisfactions enable them to contend for it. Is it this incessant weighing and battling that brings forth exalted impulses and magnanimous deeds that correspond with them? For if there are no deeds, if it is but barren speculation and the soul grows no larger, then is the work in vain. Above all must be that greater law of love to one's neighbor, of appreciation, of justice, of kindly consideration.

And as she has been brought more intimately within the lives of these people moving in what she has believed the serene air of culture, she finds some of them not any grander, not any finer, than ordinary mortals. It is largely a question of money which gives both leisure and education. Those she has come to like best are following the divine Master, have taken up a more generous outlook, are not fencing themselves about with high walls, lest those in the streets below should taste the sweetness, linger in the bloom and fragrance to gird anew their tired souls. She could never be guilty of such rudeness as that of Miss *Nichol's*, but she sees some of her own exclusiveness

reproduced in even that, and it is a sign of healthy growth that she despises herself for it.

Was she ever so alive to the influences of nature as she has been this spring, she wonders? Every bit of growth and bloom moves her to a passionate worship. She wanders over the hillsides and down the valleys, and brings home wild flowers wherewith to brighten the rooms which have grown steadily pretty in spite of small economies. She has brought her sense of grace and harmony to bear upon the simplest arrangement of every-day life, and her own repose of manner has less stateliness, more of the tender sweetness of womanhood.

If there is one thing she regrets more than another it is their inability to take back Dolly and the phaeton for her mother's sake. Friends are very kind in this matter. How many times she has wondered if there were nothing she could possibly do to earn that little money. There is music teaching, but two of the most energetic women who are using all their efforts in this line have families dependent upon them. The classes of young ladies who meet for social improvement are on that higher round and not for money considerations. She has come to paint very well, and in a large city, where there are so many who do worse, she might find a place to her advantage. Her ultra conscientiousness would interfere, no doubt, for she believes people who have no time to perfect themselves in an accomplishment ought not be encouraged in the wretched attempts at art that fritter away both time and money, and lower instead of raising the standard of taste by a fatuous self-complacency.

It is one of these superlatively beautiful May afternoons when the world is alight with tender harmonies in soft coloring and exquisite fragrance that she sits half-dreaming by the open window, screened from the street by the drooping, quivering vines in their early freshness. Mrs. Sayre has taken out her mother, who is much improved and evinces her olden satisfaction in many things, though *she* cannot be comforted for the wanderer.

Cynthia's quick, elastic step sounds on the board walk, and one can almost feel the rush and rustle of her joyous personality. Regina rises; she has fallen into the habit of watching for her, not infrequently goes down to the station, and now she meets her at the hall door. Her coming infuses new life. She is so brilliant now that one forgets her impertinent nose and rather mismatched features, and is tempted to call her beautiful even beside Regina.

"O Re,"—after the first salutations are over,—“you can never, never guess what has happened to me!” and her joyousness is not of the sentimental order that love brings about, rather, indeed, of the amusing, ridiculous, surprised type. “For I never dreamed of such a thing until one evening when Mr. Winterburne put it into my head. Have I any distinguishing marks about me whereby you can tell a genius as easily as Rosalind could recognize a lover?”

“A genius!” Regina exclaims in a dazed manner.

“Yes.” Cynthia laughs with a bright incredulity. “See here,” and she takes out of her pretty Russia leather memorandum-book a crisp, clean check. “I had to bring this home lest you might not believe me. It is fifty dollars for a little story, one of those simple, vivid, heart-breaking bits of things that occur so often among poor people, with the curious mixture of homely wit and quaint humor, of which I do believe they are quite unconscious. They say things every day in school that would be applauded and appreciated at an evening company where brightness is one of the requisites. I don't mean that it was *quite* exact, one has to preserve the everlasting unities, and the incidents themselves haven't always a dramatic setting. I think that perspicacity is due to Mr. Winterburne and Mr. Armitage,” and the ready smile hovers like sunshine over her face. “After he—Mr. Winterburne—expressed such implicit faith in my powers, I tried. I had not much of the divine assurance of genius. Mr. Armitage took it in hand for me; he has a friend quite experienced in literary matters. I kept saying all the time, as we used when we *were children* and wanted to go on a picnic, ‘Oh, I know

it will rain !' only my certainty was that it wouldn't succeed, when there came to Mr. Armitage a most enthusiastic letter from his friend, and a few days after, this check, an order for half a dozen stories at intervals, and such a kindly letter ! Why, for a little while I was as much dazed as when the fortune came to us ! It didn't seem as if a small thing that almost wrote itself — would quite, if some one could invent a brain telephone — was worth the money. I had a modest feeling that I ought to politely return at least forty of it. And six stories — think, Re — it will buy back Dolly and pay for her keep a while ; and then, like good, queer Mrs. Prall, we must trust to Providence, which means in her dilatory sort of way getting up and doing it yourself, unless it is rain when the ground is too dry. That she can't accomplish."

Regina has been breathing in a slow, compressed manner, as if at one untoward bound the depths of self-control would give way to a rushing torrent. Her lips are set, her eyes are fixed on some ulterior object of which she has no consciousness. All she feels is the bitter, rending knowledge that her most fervent, her most secret and sacred wish has been to possess a genius of that divine, overmastering sort of which there could be *no* question. She is dumb, helpless, without any gift that can make her of value to others or raise her in her own esteem.

Cynthia is disappointed by the silence. Perhaps they have overpraised her at Warwick, where they all admire her so much.

"O Re," she cries, with a tender, appealing passion, "don't you approve ? — don't you " — There are tears in her eyes.

Regina's arms are about her neck in a convulsive clasp. She will stamp out this fiend of envy before it takes root : surely she is brave enough to do that !

"My dear Cynthia," — her voice is tremulous and suggests the sob it is crowding down — "how could any one refuse to be glad ? But — you do everything " —

■ "You should have had the genius, Re. You would have

had such a magnificent setting for it." Cynthia is half laughing, half crying, kissing the cold, fair face with unwonted fervor and tenderness. "I feel as if I were masquerading, getting credit under false pretences. And maybe it isn't a real genius, only a kind of capability that comes to people on the spur of the moment."

"It is a genius," says Regina in a fuller, tender tone. "Rejoice and be glad in it. I am glad for you."

CHAPTER XXIV

AN UNQUIET GHOST

They have most power to hurt us whom we love.
We lay our sleeping lives within their hands.

SHELLEY.

NORMAN WINTERBURN twists the end of a telegram sharply in his fingers and makes an indescribable little gesture of dissatisfaction. A week hence he is to pay down ten thousand dollars on that wretched Bradley business, and in the coming September an equal sum which releases him forever. There is some new quirk, doubtless, but why should not the notice come from Mr. Talcott? Instead, it is Mr. Sayre. At three, sharp.

There are so many things he could do with the money, better uses he imagines than any Jasper Bradley will ever make of it. And just now he has so many projects on hand that he grudges it. If it could be handed over to the Halfords, he would not mind. Try his utmost he can devise no means to benefit them that any honorable pride would accept. They are not objects of benevolence.

He looks at his watch. It is nearly train time, so he makes himself ready, gives a few orders, and saunters off. He will pay a brief call on Mrs. Halford, he always does; but fate must have Regina in her especial charge, for he frequently misses her. He might consider it a studied avoidance, only he goes unannounced. When they do meet, she puts between them a quiet impassableness. He respects it. He has the large generosity that will not at present endeavor to be understood. Once or twice his soul has risen up in fierce masculine protest when he has heard of some avowed preference on the part of an admirer who dares come near her.

One evening when Alice and Cynthia have been jesting about the future and the fame that may accompany their profits, Alice plans her life on the basis of a single woman.

"You and Regina have odd ideas," laughs Cynthia. "Are spinsters born, not made? Regina never counts on marriage, but I give notice that I expect to fulfil a woman's destiny sooner or later. Somewhere about the world wanders my forlorn counterpart, drawing nearer and nearer. I have an abiding faith in him."

It is a comfort to listen to that comment on Regina.

Have so many things happened in a year, he wonders? It was May when he strayed up here to look after his fortune. It is later; in fact, the month has almost gone. The reign of apple blooms is over and roses have come in their stead. When he is quite an old man and done with the toil and moil of business, he will retire to this quaint, dreamful town and spend his declining days. He means to fully earn his rest.

Mr. Sayre is at his office door and grasps the visitor's hand cordially. They go within, to the anteroom. Mr. Talcott sits there looking indifferently cheerful. A plain country woman past middle life, comfortably but not fashionably attired, glances up at Winterburne with a certain vague curiosity.

"This is Mrs. Converse," Mr. Sayre announces. "She is a daughter of Joshua Lane."

It is an effort to recall Joshua Lane at that moment. He remarks some old-time letters lying on the table, and a half distinct association gives him the clew.

"Mr. Lane — one of the signers of Mr. Bradley's will," he says tentatively.

"Yes. We have unearthed a queer bit of fact that may change matters again."

Mr. Talcott gives a sort of approving movement of his whole face that can hardly be called a smile. Evidently he is not displeased.

"Yes. Joshua Lane was not in Beverly at the time the will was signed. He was quite poorly that fall, and went

to his daughter's in the southern part of the State soon after the New Year, remaining until May. The will was signed in March. There are a few letters from him, one dated two days before the will was signed, and several from his son to him."

"Why didn't this come to light before?" asks Winterburne almost brusquely. He cannot mistrust these two men, only it seems sudden and surprising.

"It wouldn't have come to light now but for this visit of Mrs. Converse;" and Mr. Sayre gives a rather grim smile. "It is a pity Ben Lane couldn't have remembered last October."

"He'd nearly forgotten about the visit," interposes Mrs. Converse deprecatingly, "and he never thought of the date. You see, it was all such a surprise to him, and when one is took sudden like, one's wits ain't always clear."

"Here are Mr. Lane's letters. These two are the important ones, I think."

Winterburne peruses them. They are models of conciseness certainly. The health of the Converse family, the fo'ardness of farmwork in this more genial region, some advice as to what crops had better go on certain fields, and an admission that the old gentleman had no idea of returning for some time. The next letter sets the date of his home-coming for May.

"You see, I thought to come with him," explains Mrs. Converse, "but one of the children fell sick with a fever. Husband, he came part of the way, as there was some business, and put him safe on the train in charge of the conductor. I should a' thought Ben would a' remembered. And long in the next winter father died. When we come to talk things over and Ben was telling about old Silas 'n' the will, he happened to mention the time. I said I'd never heard father speak of being knowin' to a will, and when we started to find the particulars, there it was! Ben, he didn't want any fuss made as 'twas all settled, but I said I didn't believe Silas Bradley ever meant his scapegrace nephew to have all that money."

"You see, Joshua Lane's signature is a flat forgery. It's very well executed. And McClaymont's may be as well. If so, Silas Bradley never signed the will, perhaps he did not even write it. We all admitted that the ink in the signatures was different. It had faded more than the body of the will. And now the question is who did it, the old man or the young one?"

"The question with me is whether you mean to reopen the contest," and Mr. Talcott looks across at Winterburne.

"You think there is a chance?"

"There certainly is, if you mean proving your point. And I will say this—I did have some doubts, but there were all the plausible circumstances. I took the case to keep it from falling in less scrupulous hands, and I gave you every opportunity. I have transferred to Jasper Bradley about half of the fortune; that would be his in his own and his wife's right. He has been extremely urgent of late, whether he has been spending a good deal, or whether he simply desires to have it in his own hands, I cannot of course tell. I intended in about ten days to make a large transfer. No one has made any bid for the property at Hazens, and only a small part of Bradley farm has been sold. I think Mr. Sayre is your adviser;" and Talcott gives a conclusive nod. "Although I shall not take the case for the will."

"Then move at once," says Winterburne. "If there were only enough left for Mrs. Halford's share, I should take this step."

"Very well;" and Mr. Sayre's face expresses his satisfaction.

"I should have a much kindlier feeling for Mr. Bradley if he had not shown himself so grasping last autumn. He did give me to understand that Mrs. Halford would not be altogether a loser, that he should partly recompense her loss. I urged this upon him afterward, but he paid no attention. I do not suppose it can be proved as to who really put in the signature, but if the young man should be *rigorously examined*" —

"He will not appear," declares Winterburne. "He *knows* who did it."

"Well, it was pretty daring, and yet there was an excellent chance of success. I think Morton Bradley was the instigator, perhaps the chief actor," says Mr. Sayre. "He persisted that there must be a will, and I fancy he must have known that one *had* some time been made in his favor. I considered him at first an irritable, half-crazy person, but I believe now it was a shrewd cover for his designs."

Winterburne discusses the matter thoroughly with Mrs. Converse. He wants no mistake made this time. She has no objection to appearing as a witness. She has no hesitation in admitting some grave facts against Morton Bradley, and that he had more than once quarrelled with his aunt and uncle on money matters.

"Miss Joanna always interceded for him until the last time. I was here in town then. After he went away she never mentioned his name. It doesn't look reasonable on the top of that they'd make a will giving him everything. I said so to Ben. Men are so afraid of getting into trouble. I do wonder he didn't think more about it last fall," Mrs. Converse comments reflectively.

"There were the fire and the old man's death. It was rather tragic, and the handsome young fellow had every one's sympathies. It's odd how public opinion is swayed by circumstances. And now," says Mr. Talcott, rising, "I will leave you to consult about your own affairs. As soon as the notice comes to me, I will serve it, you may depend upon that."

Winterburne learns that Lane and Mr. Bradley had been really warm friends, and had some business dealings at intervals. No doubt Morton Bradley was aware of this. Trickery somewhere is quite evident. Mr. Sayre is to proceed at once.

He does not go over to the Halfords' when he leaves the lawyers. They have decided that at present it is best not to say anything about the forthcoming suit. Winterburne

has a misgiving that Regina would object strenuously. Perdita must be concerned in the scandal, and her sensitive pride will be wounded. But one cannot afford to throw away a competency for the mere sake of one's pride. Will she consider him aggressively mercenary, since he means to shoulder the onus of the affair? The trial cannot come on for some time yet, so all parties are pledged to the closest secrecy possible.

Cynthia's success in her intellectual venture has been a matter of the keenest delight to Miss Hilliard. She takes an extreme interest in the young girl; she does indeed covet her as a sister. Cynthia's joyousness is inspiring. Her health is so perfect, her temper sunny if rather volatile, and the subtle, changing face is a study, often a surprise. She has developed more truly than under the rather restricting nature of Regina. The sense of being useful in a high degree has spurred her to her best efforts. With Miss Hilliard she has taken quite as necessary a place as Lois; in truth, the older friend sometimes has spasms of fond jealousy. Cynthia's buoyancy is of the generous kind that scatters its sunshine broadcast, that revivifies drooping spirits, that gives freely, asking nothing back, yet reaping a continual reward.

The warm days prove rather trying to Miss Hilliard, who has been keeping up an unusual tension for some months with her own work and the interest in outside matters. A change is hardly to be thought of yet, for she cannot resolve to go away until Cynthia's school term closes, which will not be until July. The drives have been gone over so many times that they are rather tame and languid, unless they are made so long they tire Alice.

So Winterburne gets a pretty and commodious boat, comfortably appointed with an awning overhead to shut off the heat of the sun, and sends them out on the beautiful river that is not regularly navigable, and therefore has no busy wharves and docks, but winds in and out in dreamy splendor, the high hills shutting up spaces of solemn quietness, *then broken and dwindling down until fields and orchards*

were visible through the openings, mysterious paths leading into undiscovered countries. Then some small stream would come rushing through with its musical song in various keys until it rippled down and was borne on by the greater river. They came to places where the rifts caught it in eddying little currents and miniature whirlpools, quivering and shifting in the sunshine, breaking up into sparkles resplendent with gems; while the strange, murmurous, warning sound smote upon their ears as they kept at a distance; little nooks of weird half-darkness with the soft fronds of fern, the colored mosses that seemed to go from palest, brilliant green and the soft red-browns to dense patches of black; rounded curves, outlets and inlets, then lichened rocks again or bare brown spaces sprinkled with sands of gold; birds coming out of leafy coverts or singing sweet melodies within them, and over all the late afternoon sky with its wonderful glory.

Sometimes they take fruit and various light dainties for a twilight repast, and come home in the tender gloaming. Sometimes it is Armitage and one of the boatmen, or Winterburne, occasionally both friends together. They talk of the deep, unfathomable subjects out here in the stillness; the bothers and perplexities of the day are folded away, they are among the high things of God. It is rest and refreshment.

Sitting opposite Winterburne, Cynthia often studies the clear-cut, kindly face, so seldom introverted by abstruse thoughts, that is full of a vigorous friendliness, not a mere passive assent to the high, practical uses of life, but a determination to have a hand in bettering the harder conditions of life for a few, if we cannot reach out to the many. She wonders a little how she has come to understand these phases that used to bore her intolerably in Regina. But Regina's wisdom was narrow, applied to the few; his is broad and many-sided, and has quick sympathy with the weight of monotonous suffering rather than the exceptional cases. She sometimes thinks if these two could meet on the grand open plain of human endeavor, if Regina's use-

less theories could be pruned and shaped to real purposes, to that kind of spontaneous love and outgiving. So noble a soul should not be kept in fetters even if they are of one's own making.

But this will never be, she thinks. They are at opposite ends of the poles. He sees her grand possibilities, but he can never come near enough to influence her. She can be so cold, so unmoved. Cynthia hardly realizes that underneath these calm exteriors run streams that some skilful hand can turn to rushing currents. Her soul is limited by a girl's narrow experience. She is glad to let herself drift along this delightful, beguiling shore, not asking whether the haven be safe or perilous.

That another is studying her in this half-unconscious fashion, dreaming of an alluring future with two souls in fine accord, never occurs to her. She has no sense of personal aggrandizement where the admiration of the opposite sex is concerned. She likes men who are bright, entertaining, and congenial; she finds them less captious about little things than women of the same capacity and education. She is a good comrade because she has so little self-love, is so willing to share her best where one needs it, even if it may not be wholly appreciated.

It has been a great delight to Alice Hilliard to assist in developing this original combination of virtues, and adding ballast to those likely to dispel themselves in frivolous pursuits, or idleness. She keeps in her mind one ideal, and she finds her pupil charming and tractable. She will always love youth, and the peculiar *verve* and eagerness of its blossom-time. She has a desire also, pardonable enough, not to be thrust out of her brother's life, not to be separated from this tenderest of love; but she recognizes that a wife's rights will come first. Not a word or sign does she make to startle either of these two souls from their delightful tranquillity.

Armitage has organized a boat-club of some of the young lads, and endeavors to take them out when they are through *with their work* on Saturday afternoon. This evening is

the most dangerous time of the whole week. They have their money, they can lie in bed late Sunday morning after their carouse, and spend the remainder of the day sobering up to be fit for work again.

"If they could once be taught the real advantage of economy in both health and money," Armitage says desperately.

"It takes generations to weed out traits that have been rooting themselves for generations. And so much of the work has to stop off in the middle, because the workers drop out, often for causes they cannot control. And the next man comes along with different ideas. I wonder if we haven't too many systems? But I observe that every man smitten with philanthropy is anxious to try his own system," and Winterburne laughs genially. "Even I am not exempt. And I dare say I am sometimes quite a tyrant, even to you, Armitage?"

"I am convinced that we are both aiming at the same result. I couldn't conscientiously work with a man who denied the great truths of religion;" and the eager, spiritual face flushes a little.

"I've always maintained if the people who professed to follow the golden rule as a social or economic principle really did it, they would convert the world. And when the intelligent people who have the power, do it, we shall have the right to call all others to a stricter reckoning. I've made up my mind to take the other fellow into account, to study out what I should like if I stood where he did."

"He would say divide up. That would plunge you over into rank socialism. For how long would the division last? You, with your sense of justice and better trained reasoning faculties, wouldn't ask it."

"Then we must consider the best methods of training. If every well-informed, conscientious man took up only one poor brother and made him a useful man, a good citizen, — say we began with one young man at his most impressionable period, — we should bring about the Millennium presently. But we start out on the grand aggregate, and we don't reach it. There ought to be more individual effort. The

majority of people don't like being herded in together, I find; but that seems the present tendency. I'll admit it is a cheaper way of doing good. We're not likely to have that to bother us here, however. And really, Armitage, we have made a beginning; you and Miss Halford are invaluable."

June sails by in regal radiance. There are days when Cynthia longs to fly out to woods and wilds, though the schoolroom is as cool and clean as it can possibly be made. Oddly enough most of the larger girls are not longing for vacation.

"It's so much nicer here, teacher," they cry regretfully.

"There ought to be some one to go right on," says Cynthia, rather distressed. "They will get out of training."

"If some of the young ladies could be persuaded to serve — say a week at a time" — And Miss Hilliard glances at her brother.

"And bring in nine or ten different systems," laughs Winterburne. "The last state of the school would be worse than the first."

"Yes, it would," rejoins Cynthia decisively. "Another year there will be two of the monitors really capable girls, — one who can't darn a stocking yet," and she laughs brightly, "but who will be able to teach school."

It is decided that Alice must go away at once; she grows more languid every day, and suffers not a little with her old trouble. Cynthia is gently resolute that she cannot share the pleasure at present. She has some plans of her own, and the quiet beauty, the cleanliness and peace of Beverly will be most grateful. For Warwick will require much of man's making-over before it can attain to any eminent attractiveness.

There are some prizes for the best scholars, there is also an exhibition of their several abilities. Cynthia has arranged a pretty little dialogue that almost amounts to a play, and delights the children beyond compare. She has planned for Alice to come and spend a week with her mother, and everything seems tending to a most agreeable conclusion.

Winterburne learns that no attention has been paid to Mr. Sayre's notice by Jasper Bradley, except an urgent demand upon Mr. Talcott for all the moneys due his father's estate. This is prevented by a legal process. He is rather undecided as how best to inform the Halfords, when the climax is reached in a most unexpected manner.

He comes in one day rather late; he has been taking dinner in family conclave on his return from the mine.

"There is some one in the office — a girl," announces Dale. "I thought at first it was Benson's daughter, but it isn't. Wants to see you."

Benson is a discharged hand that all have agreed shall not be reinstated. Dale is afraid of Winterburne's soft-heartedness; but he can be firm enough where a principle is involved.

He smiles vaguely and walks in. A small figure is huddled in the office chair pushed over to the window, but set so as to be out of the range of intrusive eyes. It does not stir at first.

"You wanted to see me," Winterburne remarks gently.

Then she turns. A pallid, dark, little face with great, frightened, brown eyes and quivering lips, a look as of some hunted thing in hiding. He has to study it a moment.

"Perdita!" he cries in astonishment.

She glances around furtively, then at him with imploring appeal.

"I came to you," she says tremulously. "I wanted to know if, when you had a secret of another person's, if you could be shut up, if you could be considered out of your right mind? And I ought to confess it," piteously. "They were so good to me. Auntie was like my own mother. Only I loved him, and he would never let me tell it, even to him. He said I had dreamed it; but I saw it there on the table" —

"The will, you mean?" Winterburne comments quietly.

"Oh, *do* you know?" she cries amazed, yet with a strange relief. "Did some one else see it — find it? I told him

I had not betrayed the secret. He was so angry, I thought at first he would kill me; but it had never passed my lips!"

"What *do* you know about it? We have proof that the signatures were forged."

He fixes his eyes steadily upon hers, as if to govern their wavering lights.

"I don't know who did it. When I saw it, there were no names on it and no seal; but I am positive it was the same will. And I couldn't tell then—I didn't know what they meant to do with it, or where it had come from. Then when I thought it over, I knew an unsigned will was of no account. And—he loved me so! He *did* love me then; but I think he is tired of me." And she gives a heart-breaking sigh. "I am not handsome like Regina. And he cared for her, I know now. I was so proud to have him prefer me, to want to marry me! Ah, what a silly child!"

Her small, clinched hands beat her breast in passionate despair.

Winterburne draws the other chair, and sits down beside her.

"Will any one come, do you think?" She starts as if she would fly, and glances frightenedly at the door.

"No one will come;" but he slips the bolt as a precaution.

"Now," he says in his soothing, assuring tone, "tell me when you saw the will, and where it was?"

"While we were at Mount Sardis I went home one day. I went through into their rooms—I ought not to have gone," she cries with piteous regret. "I wanted to find Jasper. There was no one in the room at first; it was old Mr. Bradley's, and the table was full of papers."

She pauses, and looks up at him with dry, wild eyes. He takes her hands, chafes them gently; for all the summer day they are cold.

"There was a queer, yellow, old paper spread out. It had been folded; but it was all straight, and the letters across the top were so large that somehow I couldn't help *seeing them*. They were, 'The last Will and Testament

of Silas Bradley.' I couldn't get away; it was as if I had been frozen there. It was mean and shameful, I know, but I read it. I couldn't move my eyes from it. It was a snake charming me. And it gave everything to Morton Bradley; there wasn't another name mentioned. But no one *had* signed it, and Mrs. Crouse said there were two names beside Silas Bradley's, and a great red seal. They were not on it then—oh, I can see just how it looked. It's always before me when I shut my eyes;" and she shudders.

"And then?" prompts Winterburne.

"Jasper came down the tower stairs. I was so frightened, I sprang to him and screamed; and he was so tender, so"—A faint color warms her pallid face. "I had not been quite sure until then how much he loved me. He used to tease me sometimes, and I was afraid—yes, I truly was afraid he would care most for Regina. I was only a silly, little child; but I thought if he loved any one better than he did me, my heart would break. And it has broken now," she cries pathetically.

"You told him what you saw?"

"No, I didn't; he wouldn't let me. I can't make you understand;—but he said I had been frightened by the ghostly room, and he was so tender, so lovely! He took me back to our part and comforted me, and I was so happy. When I returned to Mount Sardis with Regina,—she had been to look at the cottage, and only asked me if I saw old Mr. Bradley,—I couldn't think what I ought to do. I knew Jasper wouldn't forgive me if I told. And I asked a gentleman staying there—he used to call on Regina—to tell me about wills, and I found it was of no account whatever unless it was signed. So I felt quite easy in my mind, but Jasper wouldn't let me speak of that morning. I didn't want to get married in the manner we did. I was a weak, silly girl to let him rule me so; but he never gave me any time to consider. The others were going to leave Bradley House, you know, and I thought it such bliss to stay with Jasper. Why, I can't tell you"—her weary eyes kindle and a dreamy smile hovers about her lips; "it

was like being in paradise. He was a very prince; but he hurried me from place to place, and I was all tired out when we came home."

She sighs, and leans back her head quite exhausted. He remarks then how thin she is; how the bright little flower has faded and lost much of its charm.

After some moments he brings her back to the narrative. She takes it up at the night of her home-coming, and her horror as she hears the story and knows that her aunt and cousins will be dispossessed! And her startling manner of confronting the father and son moves Winterburne strangely.

"Then I was ill, you know, after that horrible fire. I can't remember things clearly. But Jasper promised me when it was all settled that he would give back Aunt Halford's part, that he was not going to injure them in any manner. Of course he didn't. I used to write, but I was afraid to say anything about the money. Once when he was very angry, he said he should swear I could not have seen any will on the table that morning, for there never had been any. Sometimes I tried to think there wasn't, that it was all a dream, as he insisted. And if he had gone on loving me" —

"My poor little girl" —

"It was so wicked and deceitful in me not to say a word! I might have prevented all the trouble if I had only had the courage to give up Jasper. And it hasn't been quite a year! Sometimes we were very happy. Then there were handsome women with whom he talked and danced and spent whole long evenings, while I stayed at home and played on my violin, until its notes all seemed sorrowful cries. I wanted to come back to Beverly, but he would not let me. Then he planned to go to Europe, — he was tired of America, he said. I begged so to stay that he grew very cross with me. He had never been cross, only neglectful, indifferent, and teasing. I was too small, and plain, and pale, and uninteresting. He didn't see what had ever *induced him to marry me!* I said one day it was because

he was afraid I would tell about the will I saw; but he merely laughed and said I had never seen any, that it was only my crazy dream when I was ill. Then something came not very long ago, — a letter from his lawyer, that made him fearfully angry." She knits her brows as she studies Winterburne's face anxiously.

"We had some proof." He has listened with curious attention, convinced that the two men have schemed to possess the whole estate, and gained it fraudulently. One little word from Perdita might have led to the truth. Yet he can see how she has been between the two fires, to be scorched and almost devoured at the last, by the very fierceness on the side she trusted. "He was served with a notice. We know that one signature has been forged."

"He thought I did it," she cries shudderingly. "He was so angry. I had never seen him like that. And since then it has been terrible! He said a man could put his crazy wife in an asylum, and I was filled with terror. He did not let me go out of his sight for days. But last evening he went away with some gentlemen, just to be gone a few moments, he said. I had been ill all day with a headache. Then I rose and put on my plainest street dress, — an old one he had bidden me give to the maid, — and went out. It was nearly ten. I went to the railroad station and took the first train, and travelled all night, going out of my way, but I did not mind that. Then I felt that I dared not go to Beverly. But I must tell some one, and I thought of you. I had to make some changes. If I had not travelled so much, I should have been frightened to death. I could inquire about Warwick; he would not dream of my coming here. And now that you do know, will you see that Aunt Halford has her share of the money back?"

"My dear child, yes! There can be no doubt but that we shall have convincing proof."

She rises. How small and sad and worn she looks! His heart is filled with infinite pity.

"Where are you going?" he asks as she takes a few uncertain steps forward.

"I am going to hide myself away somewhere, for you know I never can be happy with Jasper again. He doesn't love me. I am afraid now that he never did. And I was blind and foolish and wicked! I should like to go in a convent. Do you think I might? Because there I could pray and repent. But you see living together would be terrible! And if some time he should say I was crazy" —

"My child, you cannot go roaming round the world alone. You cannot hide away, and you must be in the care of friends. Let me take you at once to your aunt."

"Oh, no, no!" she cries, shrinking back in terror. "I cannot go there. He would be sure to come. And they will hate me when they know my cowardice, and all the trouble and shame I have brought upon them! Oh, no, I cannot! Let me go quite away, where no one shall ever find me. It will be just as if I were dead."

She flies across the room and fumbles at the door which he has barred. All the strain of apprehension is in her nerves, and her eyes dilate wildly.

"Oh, let me go!" she cries frantically. "I have confessed it all to you. You can tell them. They will never believe how sorry and ashamed I have been, and I couldn't bear Regina to look at me. It would kill me!"

She trembles violently and sways forward. He is just in time to catch the slight form that lies senseless in his arms.

Winterburne considers a moment. There is only one course just now. He will take her out to Alice, and between them all they will think up the best plan. She cannot return to Jasper Bradley, that would be cruel.

He lays her down in the two great chairs, while he sends one of the boys for a carriage.

CHAPTER XXV

WITH MANY THREADS

Hard is the choice when one is compelled either by silence to die with grief, or by speaking to live with shame. — BEN JONSON.

PERDITA BRADLEY's vehement protests are overruled. Indeed, in any event she could not have gone far, she is so thoroughly exhausted. Scarcely has she reached her haven of refuge before another long fainting fit ensues. Lois Strong disrobes her, bathes the travel-stained face, and she is laid in Miss Hilliard's bed. A fever is coming on, and she murmurs incoherently as she tosses from side to side. Occasionally she starts and beseeches some one to hide her from Jasper.

Cynthia is detained past her usual time, and is greatly surprised by this unlooked-for combination. Alice tells over the story as she has heard it from her brother.

"It is a very wretched affair! Poor little Perdita! Do you know," she says with tears in her eyes, "we shall all be glad to get her back again. At least, mother will be." How can Regina stand this fresh gossip?

"I have stirred up the trouble, it seems," Winterburne confesses rather ruefully that evening. "If I had refused utterly to move in the matter, Sayre would not have taken it in hand. The way of justice sometimes seems as hard as the way of the transgressor! Do you suppose I shall be able to make my peace with your mother?" — he halts a little, adding, "and your sister?"

"I do not see why we should remain silent and allow Jasper Bradley to prosper in his wrong," returns Cynthia. "Wouldn't it be in the nature of compounding a felony?" and she gives a slow, questioning smile.

"I do suppose right is never anything less than right," he answers.

The next morning Perdita is seriously ill. She lies in a stupor, with a high fever, and so much exhaustion that her pulse is a mere thread. It is imperative that Mrs. Halford should know, and Winterburne is the proper messenger. Miss Strong is so kindly and capable that Cynthia's courage rises. She has taken a decided stand in the matter.

"A man like that isn't fit to have the rule over any woman," she says. "Why, of course, he could clap her into a madhouse, and you'd never know anything about it! And cruelty isn't merely blows and starvation. There's things that kill a good deal surer than kicks and black eyes. Some of your fine gentlemen can torment until they've driven a woman clean crazy. A man that'll forge and steal will do anything else that he considers to his benefit. And now, Miss Cynthia, you go off to school with a comfortable heart, if it can't be so very light, and I'll do the nursing. Alice sha'n't lift a finger."

Winterburne does not go to Beverly with a "comfortable" spirit. If Regina upbraids him with mercenary designs, if she holds aside her white garments of pride, and scorns him, if she finds him to blame for this totally unexpected *denouement*, he shall almost wish his sense of justice and his overflowing sympathies had been regulated more by the rules of indifference. True, he has a right to his own, but it was more for her sake than his own that he has taken up the matter. Is he going to turn coward for a woman's favor?

It is Regina who enters the room so daintily arrayed in all its summer garniture of cool draperies and exquisite coloring. He has hoped to find Mrs. Halford this time, indeed, confidently expected it, since when least desired, fate had played him that trick, but now it is otherwise. She looks surprised. His quick eyes detect an unusual paleness, — a something quite foreign to her regal dignity. He is awkwardly silent.

"Pardon me," she begins, "if I am rather distraught. We had a painful shock last night, and mother has not recovered from it."

Her voice is unsteady, her eyes look as if tears were not far away.

"Oh, what has occurred?" he cries quickly. If she had heard anything to anger her she would not have received him in this manner, he reasons.

"We need a trusty friend, some one who will not mind trouble" — Ah, she knows at once from the light in his eyes that he will not, if she were not certain before. "Jasper Bradley was here last night. And Perdita has gone away. He believed she was here, and at first could not be convinced. And she is not in her right mind, he fears."

"What else did he tell you?" There is a touch of contempt in his tone, and his lips shut with a sharply assertive conviction.

"Oh, have you seen him?" she cries.

"No. But Perdita came — to us. She is quite ill. Her mind is clear enough. At least it was yesterday."

"I do not understand" — There is a faint inflection of terror in her tone. "Why should not Perdita come here? And — ill? She went away in the night — oh, you are trying to hide something from me!"

She sways uncertainly. They have both been standing, but he places a chair for her.

"Perdita has a secret of Jasper Bradley's concerning his great-uncle's will. It is a pitiful little story, and part of it she can best tell herself. A fortnight ago some knowledge came to Mr. Sayre that confirmed his opinion, or, I had better say, his suspicions, that there had been some dishonest work. He sent for me. He and Mr. Talcott both believed the case should be re-opened. I assented in behalf of simple justice," and he stands unswervingly before her. He will not abate one jot of his manly force, his courage to face any consequences of her disapproval. "This summons brought about a climax between the husband and wife. I think he married her to purchase immunity for his secret. He has not the stamina of a thorough villain!" and Winterburne's lip curls in contempt.

Regina's hands clasp unconsciously. A flush steals up into her pallid, weary-looking face. She remembers that she placed him over against this man in her prideful arrogance. And he stands here clear-eyed, clean-handed, challenging her for a retraction.

"Perdita," she repeats weakly. "I think it confuses me. Will you come up-stairs and tell this to mother, tell it all?" she adds. "We may be better able to judge!"

"As you prefer."

She excuses herself a moment to prepare Mrs. Halford, and then leads him to her mother's room. The elder lady is lying on a soft rose-colored couch, her pretty cambric morning dress half covered with a light wrap. The traces of her tears are evident. She holds out her hand with fervent gladness, while Regina places a chair.

"Oh," she sighs, "you have her safe, my poor little darling! I have been haunted by a hundred fears. I have seen her lying dead" —

"Dispossess yourself of these idle phantoms," he replies in his inspiring tone. "Yes, she is safe, tired and worn out with exhaustion, and fear and remorse, for the ill she fancies she has wrought."

"It was such a hasty marriage. After all, we had only known him a little while. He was very charming, but they might have been engaged a year, and she would have been young enough then. Last night there was something about him — I can't quite describe it — he spoke slightly of her, didn't he, Regina? and he had such an arrogant manner. He sneered at her mind — do you think he can have driven her half distracted? He really threatened us for harboring her!" and the pale face is flushed with an indignant light.

"Let Mr. Winterburne tell his part of the story," suggests Regina persuasively.

He tones it down to make it less painful if such a thing is possible. There are frequent interruptions from Mrs. Halford, who understands some of the mysteries attending *Perdita's* former illness. They can also see a reason for

the hurried marriage, for the infrequent letters. They have been bitterly deceived by Jasper Bradley's attractive plausibility — "for if his father did the work, he must have been an accomplice," says Winterburne decisively.

Regina sits with her face a little turned away. This is the capacity of her discernment! True, in many ways, she refrained from any insistence of her judgment. Others have been deceived as well as she: older, wiser people. But she does feel that she should have taken a more watchful care of Perdita. She was pleased and attracted, but in nowise fascinated, and Cynthia really ridiculed many of his fastidious niceties. But eager, imaginative, enthusiastic Perdita — did no one comprehend the real danger for her? She knew at the time of the marriage that Jasper's affection was a thing of naught, and all these months she has been tortured with a fear of Perdita's awakening. Still, she has tried to glean comfort from the hope that Jasper might come to love her. Rather he has come to hate her. They are as much divorced as if the law had separated them.

"In view of all the circumstances," says Winterburne, "she had better remain with us. Jasper Bradley may surprise you again, and it is best that he should not know her whereabouts." He does not want to admit that it is likely to fare very ill with her.

"But I want her as soon as it is safe," beseeches the more than mother, to whom she has been so dear. "Her home is with us, as it was before. And we will try to comfort her in her misfortunes. You are very good to us, Mr. Winterburne," she says with heartfelt gratitude.

Regina goes down-stairs with him. Why should it seem so natural to have her near? He could clasp her hand — he might draw her gently to his heart. She seems so still and white and sad. He is as much her loyal lover as he was that night so long ago.

"You will come?" he says softly, as if a loud or hasty word would be like a blow to her shrinking soul. "She *is so much* changed, that you must decide whether it is best

for your mother to see her just yet. I doubt if she has been well for some time back."

"Yes, I will come," Regina answers, but her eyes are turned from him. He is merciful in this hour of dawning triumph.

There is a moment's call upon Mr. Talcott, who is surprised to hear that Mr. Bradley has been in town. He has not seen him. The other matter he lays before Mr. Sayre, who rubs his slim fingers together in satisfaction.

"Like father like son," he says, nodding. "I only wish court would convene next week. Why, it seems to me we didn't half try in the fall. He won't get any more money out of Talcott, I can tell him!"

That afternoon Regina, who is restless beyond anything she has ever known, goes down to Warwick. She is shocked at finding matters so much worse than she has imagined, yet thankful that Winterburne has carried his secret with such generous grace.

Are they indeed to owe him everything? She has been reading somewhat between the lines. It is quite as much for them as for himself that he has taken this stand.

Perdita does not recognize any one now. She lives over bits of the past year, disconnected and rambling. Now and then she starts up and begs to be kept from Jasper. Miss Strong is an excellent nurse.

"You are all so good!" Regina says, with a tremulous accession of gratitude.

Since she cannot be of any real service, and Mrs. Halford will be awaiting her return anxiously, Cynthia drives her down to the station. For some reason she is glad not to see Winterburne again. The younger is grave, anxious, and shows the wear of the past six weeks.

"Of course," she says, just at the last, "Perdita can never go back to Jasper again. He is not to be trusted."

"Perdita will come home to us," answers Regina. She will try to make amends to the poor life crushed in the very bud, before even blossom time. That will be her work. *She accepts it almost joyfully. Only if it had been death instead of this disgraceful termination!*

There follow ten days of anxious suspense. Perdita comes very near the desperate point of danger, but there is always something in her favor, and youth wins. Cynthia closes her school amid plaudits of satisfaction, then takes a small share of the nursing. Regina comes frequently, and wins upon Alice Hilliard by her intensely sincere demeanor.

Meanwhile Jasper Bradley invades Mr. Talcott's office with his most winning assurance. As for the will—the court decided that. He knows nothing about it; he was not at home when it was found, and he really has no fear of the result, he says airily.

But there cannot be a dollar paid over until the case is again reviewed and satisfactorily settled. Mr. Talcott declines to conduct the forthcoming suit, and advises the young man to select some one else.

"Then you think there is proof to *my* detriment! It is only a silly, morbid fancy, and cannot be used in evidence."

"A silly fancy! There is the best of authority for believing Joshua Lane never signed that will. If his signature is proved a forgery the others may be as well."

The effort Jasper Bradley makes to appear unconcerned is visible. He is many shades paler, but he sets his lips firmly.

"I believe the experts decided that. I knew nothing about it, had never seen it," he says deliberately, "until it was produced in court. My father would hardly be considered capable of such business," he adds ironically.

"If the signatures are proved a forgery, the will cannot stand as you well know. One is most assuredly. You have had your share and that of your wife. I have no right to pay away another dollar. And, as I said, I purpose to have nothing to do with it."

"Oh, very well. You have been paid for your services thus far, I believe. Good-day." And he turns with his olden grace, his handsome countenance blazing. So, it was not Perdita, the poor little fool! Still, he has paid high for his secret. He has a contemptuous kindness for her,

and he would be sorry to have her suffer. But she has not been the amusement or the interest she promised. Her spirit and daring have failed utterly. He has never been able to dispossess her mind of that one belief. What fiend of fate sent her there that particular morning? She has drooped and grown plain; she has no charms of conversation, no bright wit, no pretty arts of fascination. With training she might develop into a musical genius, but he is not at all sure that he wants to be connected with professional life again. He likes pleasure, elegance, luxury. He has a Sybarite side to his nature that has grown into a controlling force the last six months. This dispirited little brown thing, longing continually for her relatives, and crying in her solitary moments, is not a cheerful companion, he has admitted to himself, and may become an intolerable bore. If he could have felt certain that his father would die so soon! Still there would have been the ugly evidence she could give, as Perdita Cope.

It has been like playing a game of chance. When all seemed certain, the wrong card has turned up. How much does any one know? There certainly must be ways of finding out.

He is too well known to show himself boldly in Beverly for any length of time. There are little towns around where one can be quite secure. He sallies out now and then and haunts the Halford cottage, to be convinced in the end that Perdita is not there. Then a detective manages the rest, and Jasper Bradley is quite nonplussed at the fact that stares him in the face.

As he catches glimpses of Regina Halford, the old impulses rush over him, — to be re-habilitated, to shelter himself under the dignity of ancestry, and begin the new life he has longed for in some spasm of utter disgust with the other; to be a gentleman of leisure and society, to have a wife stately and handsome, and — yes, it would madden him if she did not love him. Has Regina Halford any soul, really?

Whether he would not be intolerably bored with the

restrictions and proprieties, and long for a fling into the fascinations of that Bohemian life? But his chance here is gone forever. It is not his own doing that the Bradley prestige is tarnished beyond any future recall. And the man who gave him the irremediable birthright has gone to his account. Ah, he could forgive Perdita now and here, if she loved him with the fervor and devotion that his mother loved his father. What curious romances there are in the world, what blurred and broken lives! Yet almost he has won the esteem of that clear, high, unswervingly conscientious Regina. But if a man deceived *her*, she could kill him with her cold displeasure. Well, let them all go. They will not be able to wrest from him what he has, only — it is such a drop in the bucket. And that great, honest, stupid boor over there at Warwick will just go on and on in the great waves of prosperity! Yes, life is a queer game.

Regina goes her way ignorant that she is watched and speculated upon. Through these days a soft, sweet grace flares up like a candle carried in the wind. It lights her, then wavers almost to darkness, the depths of utter humiliation. She has wanted a prophet to lead her up to great heights, a certainty of the grand fulfilment of her ambitions, and she finds all this high climbing is a mistake of wasted aspiration. The heaven of satisfaction is in the small, daily duties well done. With a new strenuous eagerness she accepts them. If through any fault or neglect of hers Perdita's life has been marred and set to a false chord, she must help to restore the disturbed harmony. She must be brave for her and bear cheerfully the vague gossip and unsatisfied wonderings, that often merge into unfriendly suspicions without any real ill-feeling in the souls of those who distribute them so carelessly. She understands that Jasper has really never loved Perdita with that unwearied tenderness which must be the corner-stone of all lasting affection. Is he not too intensely selfish, too much occupied with his own present pleasure, to make any one permanently happy?

She has liked him for what he represented to her, for his delicate appreciation of certain refinements, and he has been devoted to his father,—let her give him full credit for any virtue he may possess. But she could never have entered into that finest of all relations with him, because, as she realizes now, she never wholly trusted him. There was an undercurrent that always disturbed the repose of perfect agreement. So far as that is concerned, she has no regrets. Yet she *did* realize that Perdita could no more satisfy that changeful, exacting, absorbing nature than he could have contented her.

It is true no one is really answerable for the child's unfortunate marriage. But she knows she impatiently resented Cynthia's strictures upon him, feeling assured that Alice Hilliard had in some way influenced her. She has all along been secretly protesting against this power whenever she has recognized it in either sister or brother. She has been narrow and unjust when she thought herself superior.

It really seems imperative that Perdita should be removed as soon as possible. Miss Hilliard's need of change is urgent, though Lois and Cynthia have spared her all the nursing. The delay has been partly because she hated to go away alone.

"Cynthia," Regina says one morning, "mother and I have settled the summer plans. You are to go away with Miss Hilliard. In a day or two Perdita can be removed, and now that we have Dolly I can take her out every day and entertain her. You must have an entire change, or when autumn comes you will be quite worn out. She longs so to have you. And you have earned a larger reward than any you can possibly obtain."

A soft light shines in her eyes, and her voice is so tenderly persuasive that it touches the younger.

"But oh — are you quite sure" —

"Quite," Regina answers decisively. "You must agree to let me do a little when you have done so much."

"*But it has pleased me,*" returns Cynthia brightly, "and

I've thought, Re, that I never could have stayed at home in that little round and kept as sweet and gracious as you have done."

"The little round has taught me some grand lessons," Regina says with a humility quite new to Cynthia. "I found I had been mistaken in many things, — that one has no right to live for purely selfish aims and advancements."

"You were not selfish, Regina" — Cynthia is amazed.

"It was that most dangerous form of selfishness, the desire to thrust beyond the pale of consideration everything that did not come up to one's standard. A hard and bitter reformer I should have made truly," she says with a fine contempt. "But I have done with all that forever, I trust. And I am quite willing to take up what I once disdained, learning to give what will comfort others and perhaps make them happier. I shall try with Perdita. I shall devote my life to her and mother," she cries with a long, passionate breath, and she looks beautifully heroic. "For after all, you see, Cynthia, I have only the gifts of an ordinary woman, and I can do nothing greater than to adorn womanhood. I have given up all my dreams. It is you who will be the moving power, you with all your outflowing love and rich capacities. I shall make myself content."

The tears quiver over Cynthia's eyes like the pulsing tide of wind-blown waves. She smiles through them, her joy comes so quickly to the surface. Her arms are about Regina and their lips meet in fond affection.

"I feel like a fraud!" cries Cynthia with a half-sobbing laugh. "I can't get over the consciousness that I have taken something belonging to you."

"You could not have taken unless God gave. I have been steadfastly fighting for what he withheld, and have gained nothing — yes, that greater truth, willingness to accept what is. And with His help I shall go my way loyally."

"Re, do you know, I think a beautiful woman could be a great power in the world? There is something so win-

ning, so compelling, in beauty. If you had been holding yourself above all other women on the strength of that regal gift, if you had been haughty and exclusive because you *were* beautiful, I could have understood that. But we see that money and birth give only a sort of fictitious value after all. I am not despising either when they have wrought a good work, but it seems to me in their poverty and barrenness they are like the rocks and 'faults' in the iron veins, they only serve to bar true progress. You have to overturn them to get at what is really good. The great thing is whether one can be of service to the world, even if it is only a little world with a few people in it."

"We have rambled from our text," says Regina, wondering how Cynthia came by this wisdom for which she has been making a hard fight. "It is that you will accompany Miss Hilliard without a demur. Mother considers it absolutely necessary."

"And you will stay at home" — Cynthia feels that she ought to be queening it somewhere. "Oh, if it wasn't for Perdita — but we are all agreed, I think, that she cannot be trusted to Jasper Bradley again. And if the suit is decided against him, I do not think he will want to be burdened with her, although he has her part of the fortune in his hands. See how mistaken we have all been in him! Everybody was charmed with him last summer. Why, he could have married almost any one!" the girl declares incisively. "I dare say more than one envied poor little Perdita. I think if there had been a real engagement all this would not have happened. So you see that scores one for the conventionalities of society. I'm coming to believe in them. No doubt I shall turn into quite an aristocrat when I mount my pinnacle of fame," and she laughs with the overflow of her sunny nature.

Miss Hilliard is gratified beyond measure. Cynthia's year has been too much of a drain not to have some recuperative influences before she begins work again. Winterburne has been studying seaside resorts, where there can be the beneficial tonic of society and interest, without the mad rush of fashion and dissipation.

He drives Regina down to the station that evening. This sad incident has brought them curiously together again, has served for the first time in their acquaintanceship to give a subtle definiteness to their positions. Perhaps it is because he has the greater assurance of success in many ways that he takes the kind of manful authority he has displayed so very slightly heretofore. If she wanted to resist there would be no opportunity, but she is not so certain of any of her premises as she was six months ago. She has done him a great injustice. It is not of the kind one can frankly explain and regret, she must live out of it in certain delicate substitutions to preserve her own self-respect. What it may mean to him she does not inquire. She has answered his question so definitely, she is so different from his preconceived ideals of her that she fully believes he is disfranchised from all that old fancy.

They talk over the plans about Perdita.

"I am glad you decided Cynthia's pleasure," he says, with the little touch of gratefulness implying the favor done him personally. "It will be of great benefit to her as well as my sister. They are coming to be quite inseparables. I believe they are planning a book together."

A touch of jealousy wrings Regina's soul, the old ardent longing for the place she will never fill. She cannot now be Miss Hilliard's dearest friend, and she has a strange, unsatisfied desire to have some one stand in this most delightful place to her.

"Yes, Cynthia needed it," she says. "She has been so brave, our mainstay through this unfortunate time. You have been very generous to our poor Perdita." — Her voice trembles a little.

"I owed her some reparation, and — you all," he proceeds with a slight hesitation. "It was my decision that brought about this utterly unexpected event. When the forgery was first discovered Mr. Sayre appealed to me as to what course it was best to pursue. I could not think of any reason why the lawful, legal, just method should not at once be adopted. In any event, the Bradleys would re-

tain half. It was not because *I* was grasping" — His eager face flushes in his own defence.

She colors a little, and turns her face slightly, but it only serves to bring out the beautiful rounding of cheek and chin and the fine slope of the neck.

"You see," he continues, "Perdita could not have gone on with this terrible half-knowledge between them. Mr. Sayre's letter and notice only precipitated what must have happened a little later. If Perdita belonged to me I should be thankful it came so soon, without any more real suffering. I shall always take a peculiar interest in her, and if there should arise any after-difficulties I hope you will allow me to keep a brother's place and authority over her. We are all so linked in together, — all human souls, that the wrong-doing of one reaches much farther than another is apt to imagine."

"Oh," Regina responds after some consideration. Surely she cannot disparage his motives. It is not simply a matter affecting her wishes or desires, it is her mother's rights, and she would have no prerogative of decision.

"Well," after a long silence, "have I banned myself out forever? Have I brought about an irreparable misfortune?"

He does not glance her way now. She shall answer quite by herself.

"You did what was right," she returns slowly. "I do not see what other step you could have taken, unless the far-fetched one of misplaced generosity."

"Mr. Sayre would have taken it up on your mother's behalf. I do not think you could have prevented it in any event. But I am glad" —

The train is coming in. Both know what the ending of the sentence would be, that she is not offended, though he must be identified largely with the trouble, and in a certain manner it gives him friendly rights which he might not have gained otherwise.

As she is being whirled along the picturesque riverside a sentence of Jasper Bradley's recurs to her. Will he set

Cynthia in the place once offered to her? She has won it fairly. Since all the good gifts of fortune gravitate to her — Well, her own life and her own duties are mapped out.

Norman Winterburne has a strange new light in his eyes when he returns. They talk over the plans, and he answers the proposal they have had under consideration. He will make little excursions to them as opportunity offers, but he cannot be absent long at a time. They are to finish their preparations with what speed they can, for the summer will wane before they have laid in a sufficient supply of ozone. To-morrow or the next day he will take Perdita to Beverly, as the physician thinks she can stand the removal.

He sends Alice to bed. Lois has the tea dishes out of the way and goes up with her.

"Come out for a walk," he says to Cynthia in his insistent man's fashion. "You are getting pale and heavy-eyed, and we cannot afford to have you dropping down. You are the chief corner-stone;" and his face is alight with a tender radiance that appears only in moments of great satisfaction.

Cynthia's pulses speed to a certain delightful thrill. She has come to be on such friendly terms—is it merely friendly? The appreciation touches her. It is so simply direct, so honest, with none of the introverted meanings that mystify her in some others.

"You and Regina must have agreed excellently," she says with a mirthful intonation.

"Why, can you tell when we do *not* agree?" he asks with nervous apprehension.

"There is always something in the air. The polarity is disturbed. Regina is a circle of attraction and repulsion; that is, some uncomprehended thing, very slight indeed, may touch the rim with the power of repulsion. She isn't always conscious of it, either. And I know she is trying to live outside of it. Complex natures take a long while to settle."

"We were talking of Perdita. I wanted her to know — I have been meaning to tell her that I was at the bottom of this great trouble" —

"No, you were not," cries Cynthia incisively. "You surely did not tell her that?" and she stops surprised.

"She understood at once."

"You feel that if it had been left to Regina she would have given up our part of the money rather than have stirred in a matter likely to make a scandal! Remember she would not have had the right. The money, if it is again awarded to us, is mother's. Still, I am glad she had no voice in the matter. It is against her traditions that any member of a family two centuries old should forge a will or appropriate what was not his. Virtues are not always handed down in one groove. And I think if anything, the punishment should be greater. But she has a curiously conscientious tenderness for Perdita that will outweigh all other considerations. She almost blames herself for the marriage. I think at that time she was endeavoring to detach Perdita from Jasper. I cannot see that it was any one's fault. We all liked him a good deal, but we should have taken time to examine into the fitness, the suitability, of such a step. Regina had no hand in forwarding it, not as much as I. And I wish she hadn't this morbid conscientiousness about things. She ought to be set in a great open space where the sun could shine all around her, where there wasn't even a swinging bough to make a shadow."

"Yes," laughing softly at the conceit.

"I am thankful there wasn't any difference of opinion," Cynthia appends archly. "As we shall have to depend somewhat upon you for an unbiassed rendering of affairs, I am glad a sort of friendly understanding has been established. It has always puzzled me that you and Regina, as relatives, have been keyed on rather discordant octaves. Why, I wonder?"

She turns suddenly in her quick way and faces him. There is no moon, but the great golden planets are shining in their sea of blue. The summer night air is rare and fine, — that wonderful transparency in which you can see a leaf *stir*. And his face has in it a sudden tremulous scarlet; a

speechless force of questioning, insistent passion lights his eyes.

"Are we — do you think us so very discordant? Are there no grand thirds and fifths in human harmonies? Does it not come to be understood after a while?"

He is not talking to her. It is a confession to the stars, a whispering into the bland airs of the night that they alone may carry the sacred knowledge. Like a far flash it comes to Cynthia, — this thing she has half-suspected in a girlish fashion, doubted because it did not hold in it her preconceived elements of love, come to disbelieve in it at last, — to fancy him free from any lingering regard. Has there been anything more?

"Yes," he says with a sudden brusque alternation in tone, "are we so very discordant?"

It was as if he resented it. Cynthia feels a strong shiver seize her in spite of the warm summer air. This knowledge has come upon her with such an overwhelming force that she can only brace herself mentally. Her shattered resources do not at first admit of an answer.

"Nothing is quite hopeless to a man until the end of life," he says softly. "And whatever I wanted, whatever point of agreement was worth striving for, I should never give up until convinced beyond a peradventure. Are we talking nonsense?" with his wholesome, tender laugh. Then he draws her hand just a trifle through his arm and they walk on in silence for some minutes.

"We shall all befriend Perdita," he says presently. "She is very young, and I cannot believe this unfortunate marriage is to blight her whole life. But I would as soon place her in the lair of some prowler of the wilderness as to send her back to Jasper Bradley. I do not believe he will ever ask it. He has made no further effort that I can learn. How does he know where she is — whether in want or suffering or lying dead somewhere?"

The picture of him in his grace and beauty, in his curious golden lights, comes up before Cynthia. His devotion to his father, his kindly, touching attentions to her mother,

the many charming theories, half-beliefs, delightful qualities; and one other remembrance that touches her sweet nature with a kind of acrid temper, — Regina has preferred him to Winterburne, has not hesitated to subtly place the latter on that lower round when he should have reigned a king.

"Regina is stirred with profound tenderness for the poor little girl," he says in that delicate approval, almost like a stab to Cynthia. Has no one else been tender?

Cynthia is curiously unresponsive. To-night of all nights he longs to hear the tender praise, the soft, excusing words that fall so readily from the younger's lips. There is a vague sense of loss, an uncomprehended disturbance in the fine sympathy she has been wont to give.

"Are you tired?" he asks presently in that sweet indescribable tone. "Your steps lag a little. I ought not have brought you out. You must not let me blunder so in seeking my own pleasure."

He turns her round. The rest of the talk is about the six weeks when he shall have none of the charming home life that he declares has spoiled both him and Armitage. Jason Prall and his wife are sitting side by side in the starlight on the step of the back porch, — the wanderers have come through the garden. Cynthia stares a little blindly at these commonplace people, who have cared for each other nearly forty years with no wide range of sentiment.

She looks in at Perdita who is sleeping restlessly with one thin arm over her head. Lois sits nodding. Alice is in her bed, a white ghost.

"Come and tell me if you had a nice walk," she says cordially, holding out one hand.

"I believe I was too tired to enjoy it."

Cynthia's tone is weary, the clasp of her fingers languid.

"You poor child. I am afraid we haven't half considered you, doing double duties everywhere. When we are away by ourselves" —

"Yes." Cynthia gives a feeble little laugh and says

good-night. The story that Alice has counted on — she can see everything in this sharp second sight, — will never be hers to tell.

Cynthia Halford sits by the open window in a wide wakefulness she has rarely known before. It seems as if she would never sleep again. Like a picture, the summer passes before her, the sweet summer that can never come again, the vague beatitude that can have no name. It has passed the calm borderland of friendship, it has not reached the open sea of love. She is too essentially just to covet what belongs to another, she knows now it always belonged back in the little parlor, where he used to talk to them and watch Regina. She does not understand this involved nature, she only knows if so splendid a love as this man can give were offered for her acceptance, she would be impelled by that mysterious, nameless power to take it. She could not even hold him at arm's length while she was considering. Will Regina ever come to love him as such a large, generous nature should be loved?

But, after all, that is not what must decide it for her. She has seen a splendid possibility — for another woman. Whether for good or ill, joy or pain, all his life long he will set Regina above all others. He will be steadfast until she puts it out of his power to think of her honorably, but as the dead are recalled. She is proud in all her pain that it is simply her mistake, that he has uttered no word, that he has never held her hand in gentle dalliance, or pressed it to his lips. He has been an honorable gentleman.

CHAPTER XXVI

BETWEEN WIND AND WAVES

The book of female logic is blotted over with tears.—THACKERAY.

A SOFT, rainy July day broods over the earth. It has that incomparable fragrance out here where the short grass and the branching trees drink it in. The hills are toned with purple-gray, wrapped in illusory mists that reach up to the vague outline of sky. Cynthia finds it intensely comforting. She is glad not to have the sunshine. Presently she means to go out in it again, for she could not sit in the shade any length of time, nor have things blurred, like these trees and distant mountains. She cannot barter all the warm, bright material values for indefinite, unsatisfying dreams of what might have been, but never was. Her brave nature is honest to the core. And she has this gift, this one thing Regina has coveted. Is there some curious purpose in all these lines, that seem so crossed and tangled? Regina would ask for nothing outside of it. She would gloat over it as a miser over his treasure.

And here is this other wonderful, beautiful richness ready for her to take, to wrap herself in, to wind about her as a rare, priceless garment. Cynthia stands amazed that one could pass it by unknowingly even. That Regina may have refused it does not even occur to her; but it will always be hers. And they can no more change possessions than they can change their natures. The conceit amuses her.

She was late in sleeping, so she has not come down until long after Winterburne's departure. Only Lois has been there to pour his coffee and give him the unspoken God speed to his daily duties. She knows how brightly, how *joyfully* he will go at them. Will any one else ever come

to appreciate this wide, outflowing nature? Will not the other strive to keep it within bounds, to clip and train and thwart its larger uses?

Perdita is brought down-stairs in Lois's strong arms, and walks about a little. She is restless, and impatient to get to Beverly. So far she has expressed only fear concerning Jasper, and not the slightest desire to see him. Alice is languid, and Cynthia makes an effort to appear like her olden self; but she feels washed out like the day. They read a little, they plan a little, and the hours go by. Armitage comes home with Winterburne. There are some last things to consult Cynthia about. A distraught expression comes and goes in his face, and lo! Cynthia's tender interest is aroused. There is so much in the wide, varied world!

The next day Perdita is taken home to the strange, new house she has never seen; but it holds her more than mother, and the restful love she has longed for all these weary months. She is safe in the clinging arms; their kisses and tears mingle together.

Regina is so cheerfully ready with her assistance that Cynthia wonders she has never recognized this invaluable quality in her before. Then she recalls that the elder has always done the planning, and brought about astonishing results in her clear, definite, if restricted fashion. It seems a little unkind to go away and leave her with all these cares and burdens. But Mr. Sayre will be her friendly adviser in any stress.

And at last Regina Halford is alone with her new duties. The journey has tired Perdita; but the delight and ease restore her wonderfully. She has such an appreciative listener in Mrs. Halford, such an ardent sympathizer, who can be quite as inconsequent as herself. They find hosts of charming virtues in Jasper, then they turn to the grave and bitter faults.

"And if I had been wiser and stronger," bewails Perdita. "*But I was so frightened, and I tried to make myself believe it was a dream; I did, really. I loved him so much then. I was only afraid of losing him, and I thought*

I could never live without him. Why, it seems now as if I had been bewitched with some horrible spell. Do you think he will come for me? O mother, you will not let me go?" and Perdita sobs wildly at the thought.

Is this the love that less than a year ago gave up home and everything for Jasper's sake! Regina wonders with a curl of the lip that is ineffable scorn. And yet, who has taught her anything of the personal sacredness of marriage? It comes natural to Regina, as all matters of serious import seem to do. But this little butterfly, of whom no one expected grave consideration, has made a sad mess of her life. How shall she be taught to respect bonds that have been so lightly entered into? for she is still Jasper Bradley's wife. Regina tries to imagine on what side duty would lie if he came and demanded her again.

Meanwhile, there is the small world of Beverly to face. The reopening of the will case is not so far off but that people begin to discuss it. The fact has come out that Mr. Lane never signed the will; and there are dozens of witnesses who can recall now, from some particular circumstance, a very direct corroboration. The theory is the will was written for some purpose, since the paper is actually of a twenty-years'-ago make, and like that largely used by Mr. Paulin. But that Mr. Bradley ever intended it to be used becomes more and more unlikely to the townspeople, who remember that after the last visit, neither aunt nor uncle ever mentioned the nephew.

As Perdita grows stronger, and begins to take more interest in matters, this is explained to her one day by Mr. Sayre. Regina has left it to her whether she will keep her own secret or not.

"What can they do with Jasper?" she asks wild-eyed.

"The punishment is imprisonment. But we cannot really tell who forged the signatures."

Perdita studies the flowers on the carpet in an absent manner.

"Mr. Bradley was always writing," she says; "and he

used to write long lists of names. They used to burn papers in the fireplace. I have seen the ends."

"Did anything especial occur the day you went there?" he asks suddenly.

Perdita turns pale and red, and then begins to cry in an uncertain, trivial fashion.

"It is against her own husband," Regina says in a half protest. There is something terrible to her in thus carelessly betraying the soul one has promised to honor.

"He wasn't my husband then," Perdita cries inconsequently. She veers round so quickly, her most passionate impulses are so evanescent. Regina cannot properly estimate her. The year has changed her greatly, and she is like a new character, with bits and suggestions of the old.

"If you had not learned about this other matter," she begins with tremulous eagerness, looking at the lawyer with feverishly bright eyes. "If I had *all* the secret, but I haven't, and I *did* tell it to Mr. Winterburne. I was almost crazy. Why, if I *had* remained with Jasper, I might have gone quite out of my mind, then he could have shut me up as he threatened."

"Threatened?" Mr. Sayre says with a sharp accent.

She glances up at Regina. She has a childish fondness for retailing her woes and having them sympathetically appreciated. She has been so deprived of all confidences dear to youthful feminine nature, and now she plunges into the story. Mr. Sayre notes the various connecting links. He has had no doubt latterly, now he is indignant, that even this guileless child has been used to further such contemptibly dishonest purposes. He quite loses sight of her weakness and want of courage at the opportune moment; perhaps her very frankness serves to disarm any censure of the poor, trembling, excited little thing with her large pleading eyes that look out of such a wan, eager face.

When Regina goes down-stairs with Mr. Sayre, she pauses in the hall, and raises her eyes beseechingly.

"Will Perdita have to be called upon as a witness?" she asks with a shrinking terror.

"My dear Miss Halford, do not distress yourself," and he takes her slim, cold hand. "I think not. My opinion is that Jasper Bradley will not appear in the matter at all, for the simple reason that he cannot face it, that he knows the truth;" the lawyer gives a grim suggestion of a smile. "Then the case will be a very easy one. But you do not mean to allow Perdita ever to go back to him? though I doubt if he asks it."

"You think a separation is just?" Regina asks it hesitatingly. She has been curiously balancing it in her mind, because she would like to sever every thread of connection with him. She doubts her own sense of that higher right. It was for good and ill alike.

"Jasper Bradley lives merely on the surface, and respects no law, human or divine, that interferes with his personal comfort. He would not make a good husband for any woman; he is capable of being an especially bad one for Perdita. No doubt he would desert her if it suited his purpose. I dare say he knows just where she is. If he should come and demand her, my advice is not to let her go. A man who talks of shutting his wife in an asylum, before he has been married a year!"

Regina shudders. "No, it would never do."

Then a few days later she surprises Perdita one morning in a tempest of passionate sobs, her slight frame rent with emotion.

"I've been thinking it all over as I lay here, Regina, and how happy we were at first, when I could forget that horrible secret! He told me once I had no business to enter the room, and I had not. I was a mean, wretched little spy! I deserved all the miserable recollections. But you can't think how delightful he was at times, and he had that warm, golden beauty like the sunshine. I miss him so much, — his caressing arms, his soft, sweet, bewildering kisses, all his tender pet names, his dainty, endearing ways. I want to be loved, and I can't live without it! You are so cold, Regina! He said you were like an iceberg; that you would freeze a man's soul out of him; that

you had a beautiful face, but no tenderness; that you only wanted a man to do homage to you, and not even kiss your finger tips. But I love him, love him! It has all come back to me. I cannot stand the intolerable loneliness. Can't we find him?" And she looks up with wild, pathetic eagerness.

"Perdita!" The elder is horrified with this outburst.

"I'm so young," she goes on piteously, "to live a whole long life without him? and when he came to know that it wasn't my fault, that I didn't betray him, but the secret came to light in an altogether different manner, I think he would forgive me, and love me again. Doesn't anybody know where to write? Why, I'd go back if I could be sure of finding him. I want him so! He *did* love me. And when he came here I dare say you were cold and cruel to him. He said you hated to have him love anybody else; that you would keep me from him if you could! You know you wanted to send me away to school! And he was afraid you would persuade them all to refuse to let me marry him. You were jealous" —

"I — jealous!" Regina's eyes transfix her. "Why, he asked *me* to marry him a week or two before we went to Mount Sardis. I had meant that he never should, and thought I had made him understand. I dare say all this time he was pretending to care for you."

"He asked *you* to marry him!" Perdita interrupts, and her face is ghostly white.

Certainly she can say with all honesty that was what he meant.

"He pretended to love you? It was all a pretence. Why, he loved me from the very first day he came; he told me so a hundred times. And there was all our playing all the delicious summer" — Her voice falls to that sweet, indescribable credulity.

"Yes, you were much better suited to him, and, Perdita, no one would have made any serious objection. I liked him very much at first, but I had a fancy that he wasn't quite true. And I think he may have pretended to love

me, but you and he are both deeply, wholly mistaken, if you think I could have cared in that way."

Her whole body seems to sway with passionate indignation, and her face is in a scarlet flame that turns slowly to white heat.

Perdita rises from her pillow and leans her tear-wet face upon her hand.

"You can't understand what a delight it was to be with him — no, you couldn't have loved him," in a dreamy, far-off manner. "Go away and leave me!" starting suddenly and beating the pillow with her small fist desperately clinched.

Regina turns haughtily and sweeps out of the room in her most imperious fashion. She cannot understand this inconsequent being. Was it just or kindly to repeat that detestable episode? Oh, how does Cynthia steer clear of all these rocks and shoals? How little wisdom she, Regina, has, after all her search! She feels suddenly weak and helpless — it is not a new experience of late. If she could be taken in some one's arms and comforted! Like a far halo of light shining out of darkness a vision comes to her, a loyal lover, *her* loyal lover! All this time there has never been an hour when she needed him, and now —

An unfathomable longing sweeps through her, that transport of worship for something near by, human, that shall be strong and comprehending, that shall impel her through the mysterious channels of womanhood to some haven of exultant rest. She is so tired of fighting and studying all these things in the secret darkness of her own soul.

Mrs. Halford is sitting placidly by the shaded window where the languid sweetness of the first day lilies mingles with a bed of pungent heliotrope. She has lain down her book upon the window-sill, and is watching the dancing shadows of the vines as the sun quivers in and out. Regina crosses the room swiftly, throws herself on the hassock, and buries her face in her mother's lap. A deep, tearless sob shakes her tumultuously.

"My dear Regina!" The soft fingers caress her hair, and the very touch seems grateful.

"It is Perdita!" she begins brokenly. "Or, have I some fatal quality that interferes with the comfort I would fain give, and turns it into bitterness? We have all blindly allowed her to stray into this trouble; but I wanted to strengthen her to live out of it."

"It is too soon. She has hardly reached beyond the rough, broken shore; she has not gone out to the overwhelming sea. It may be that Heaven will keep her from the deeper sorrow."

"But — how can she love him!"

"Ah, she has come to that!" says the mother. "There will be many alternations. She did, no doubt, love him, but she does not know her own capabilities, her judgment is so immature. Our greatest hope is that he may not return and take her in an unguarded moment. She has hardly longed for him yet."

"But a man who can so deceive, who can lie, and defraud, and possibly forge" — Regina cries with horror.

"You do not understand." Mrs. Halford studies her fair daughter. "It is looking at different sides of a picture. Jasper had a great many charming ways and occasionally the love and tenderness will flood her being and sweep out all other memories. So far, she has taken the matter very lightly, with more indifference than I could really approve. To show so little sorrow at the downfall of her youthful romance would prove her indeed heartless. Have patience, Regina, with her changes. It will be bitter enough for the poor child. I must go to her."

It is a sad, long day for Perdita. Mrs. Halford soothes and comforts. It seems so hard to have her, in some degree, repeat her mother's story; but this will not be as full of suffering. Perdita has friends to stand by her in any emergency. And if Jasper Bradley never comes back —

Late in the afternoon Perdita begs to see Regina. She looks so little and childish lying there, her pallid face defined like a cameo on the pillow, the once pretty, rounded cheeks fallen in, and the outline of the chin sharpened.

The brown eyes have wept themselves softly lustrous, though their rims are still discolored.

"O Re," she cries pathetically, "was I very dreadful to you this morning? I had been thinking of him and all the delights, the journeys, and plays, and operas, and tender words and caresses until I quite forgot about the rest. And you have all been so kind to me! What if I had not come here, but wandered away off and been sick in a hospital? For I was almost dead with fatigue when I reached Warwick; and Mr. Winterburne was gentle and tender and would not let me go off as I had planned. For the horror of being thrust into an asylum was upon me. You don't understand how I can love him after all that, and all the falsehoods! I think it isn't the true Jasper that I love, it is the graces, and tenderness, and beauty that I seem to incorporate in what I believed he was. And it made me so angry when you said — but he used to make me angry too, by admiring you, and all beautiful, stately women. Only I can't always be glad for the love lost out of my life."

"My dear child," and Regina kneels beside her, takes the small, throbbing fingers in hers so firm and white, "I am sorry I said what I did. I had no right to betray my own and Jasper's secret as well. I never had any real faith in his regard for me, but after that I really desired to save you, at least, to keep you from any entanglement until you had seen enough of the world to judge a little and compare."

"No, it was quite right. It will help me to understand the hollowness of his protestations;" and a sad, serious expression wavers over her face. "Mother has aided me to look at it in the right light. If Jasper comes and is repentant, she thinks I might venture to begin life again with him; but now I feel as if all the anger were spent, and I can see my own wilfulness and disregard of you all, and the trouble I have brought upon you. O Re dear, I wish you would help me to be strong and clear-minded, and take right views of everything."

There are tears in Regina's eyes as she kisses the pleading lips.

"You must get well first," she says cheerfully. "You and I will have some nice times, for you see I am quite lonely with Cynthia being away. I never told you how brave she was last autumn when we had only such a very little money."

"She went over there and taught school for that!" Perdita cries breathlessly. "Jasper took the money away from you all! And he told me he should never disturb your share, that it was only Mr. Winterburne he meant to dispossess. Oh, I quite hate myself for loving him! I am filled with horror and shame that I should long for him!" and now Perdita swings to the farther extreme. "I wonder if you will all be able to forgive me? I do not deserve it."

Regina has only gone such a little way in that divine endeavor, she is such a fearful and trembling pilgrim that comforting and directing is a new, strange language, and halts on her tongue. For even in this has she not been living to herself, withholding in her cold, quiet grace, rather than reaching out to other souls? She has not Cynthia's generous aptitude, and the work is harder in its newness. But if she is strong, and earnest, and willing, she must also be compassionate, patient with all mental inferiority as well as the sort of moral weakness that depends so largely upon others, that draws its strength from outside sources rather than the living wells that can spring from the soul. She has taken this for her task, let her then accept it joyfully, not with secret distaste.

"How sweet you are Regina," the soft voice says tremulously. "And I called you cold! If you only will love me a little and help me! I am so frivolous and good for nothing. Yes, I have a genius, really. You haven't heard me play in so long. When I am better, I want a violin again. A professor of music told me that I had an extraordinary gift. At first Jasper allowed me to take lessons, then he grew desperately tired of it. But I used to play through the long hours when he was away. Re — you will let me have a violin again?"

That is a crucial test for Regina, and she weakly evades.

She thinks she can never listen to a violin with composure.

They are just through supper, and Mrs. Halford has gone up-stairs, while Regina attends to a few household matters. Mr. Winterburne is announced. A most inopportune guest, she thinks — does he ever strike that perfect moment, making a harmony?

She goes quietly through to the parlor. It is not dark enough for lamps, but she is thankful for the soft uncertainties that are beginning to gather about the room. The tall, compact figure with its sentient vitality almost oppresses her in her curiously relaxed state. He takes her hand and leads her to the window; there is a corner just below it, and the chairs ranged as if for a *tête-à-tête*. In one of those unheeding moods, ignorant that she has conceded anything, she takes her position nearest the window, and faces him in twilight softness, unconsciously indifferent.

There is so much to tell. He has spent his Sunday at the seaside. Cynthia is already improved, blooming and full of vivid life, but Alice he finds very languid.

"I don't know what she would do without your sister," he says eagerly. "She has been so much stronger than usual since we came to Warwick, that I was not prepared for her dropping down in this fashion; but there has been a great deal to keep her on the strain all the time, so much that was new and of vital interest. And I am very thankful they were able to get off as they did. There is some rather alarming sickness at Warwick."

"Alarming!" Regina repeats.

"Well, yes. Everything is unfavorable. The extreme heat and the showers have made all kinds of vegetation rank, — for that, read a large crop of weeds in corners and byways, and not infrequently back yards, and the rapid decay; the pools that serve for ducks and geese, the cow-sheds in a horrible condition. I don't wonder fever and other things break out! The authorities are cleaning up a little, but it should have been done in the spring. Last week one of our best workmen died after a brief illness,

though it began with a drinking bout on Saturday night. His oldest girl is one of Cynthia's finest scholars, and she is down now. What these manufacturing towns want are good clean tenements, not all huddled in together. The larger cities can't help it very well, but in a country place where land is cheap, it is simply heathenish. I beg your pardon," he says suddenly, "I know you are not interested in these things. I am so accustomed to discussing them with Cynthia."

"But — health" — she says tentatively. "And you are in it" — Can any evil touch that robust vitality?

"I don't have to sleep there;" and he gives a short, comforting laugh. "If I did — But I am most concerned for Armitage. He is in the thick of it. Old Dr. Farrand isn't well, and there's so much sick visiting — he has taken several of the doctor's funerals. Last winter the old gentleman considered him almost a heathen and a publican," and Regina can see the smile that is amusement, not contempt. "I drag Armitage out home with me to sleep where the air is fresh and restful, and Mrs. Prall gives us a splendid breakfast. He was a rather ethereal young fellow when I first took him in hand, and I don't want to lose my good efforts in having him get shadowy again. But I have not inquired especially after Mrs. Bradley?"

"She is — I think she does not improve rapidly. She comes down-stairs, and I have taken her out for a brief drive. Have you heard anything concerning Mr. Bradley?"

"I wanted to ask you. He has not been here then?"

"No," answers Regina.

"He is hardly likely to come." Winterburne's tone verges on assured assertiveness.

"I should be glad" — Regina hesitates. She has not been used to telling him her hopes and fears like Cynthia.

"I think you need not fear. The question is, how she will take it? It seems a very cruel happening for a glad, joyous young life like that, to be unexpectedly torn up by the roots, even if it is thrown over the garden fence from

which it was transplanted. One would hardly expect just these things from Jasper Bradley. I want to tell you how I first saw him."

He makes a picture of it all. She has never given him credit for vivid descriptive powers. Has she not dealt him scant measure in many respects beside? Or is it that he has not stood still—that he, like some others, has a grand capacity for self-improvement as well as that general outside advancement. Did she think this capability was inherent in special natures only? And what if his is the special, the unusual soul?

She has a curious, lost feeling, another as strange, as if she were aware of a strongly marked presence crowding into her life that she protests against with passionate sincerity.

"Jasper Bradley has many of the qualities and attractions of a very dangerous man," he says presently, when she is silent a long while, it seems to him. She never talked much, he remembers. "But there is a latent quality quite indescribable that puts one on guard."

Regina Halford flushes with a guilty feeling, thankful that it is now too dark for him to see. If she had taken her first subtle warning—if she had not been so urgently fitting her theories to the facts they could not really assimilate.

It is getting quite dark now. He can see the whiteness of her face with its crown of dusky hair, and he has an inward feeling that it is strangely weary. It is too soon to comfort her; this time he will be wary. But oh, the passionate longing that rends him!

She rises and asks Martha to bring in the lamps. While the good woman is arranging them to the proper degree of softness for a summer night, Regina goes to summon her mother. Perdita has fallen asleep after her battling day.

Mrs. Halford takes the lead in the conversation now. Regina is one of the few women born to repose; she never indulges in restless little habits. Her statuesque symmetry *has fine poses in any position she takes: every line seems*

to adapt itself to the harmonious whole. Her hands lie idly in her lap, and her slim fingers look as if they might be sculptured. Could they grasp and hold, he wonders?

He has so much to say about Cynthia. The mother quality in Mrs. Halford takes a finer pride in her daughter's venture and possible fame than he has supposed.

"She cannot miss success if she perseveres," he says. "She has such a quick eye for the homely little details of every-day life, she goes so down to the very heart of things, she catches the salient peculiarities of these out-of-the-way lives, their simple, unimaginative steadfastness, their narrow range, their shrewd, unconscious humor. She has so much of it herself. Everything is tinted and textured by her bright hopefulness; Armitage is very proud of her."

He is proud too, Regina can see. A sudden, quick thought comes to her. He will marry her. She is just the sympathetic, appreciative kind of woman that he needs, who will make him happy, — immeasurably so. It leaves a great blank and coldness in her soul, not because she loves him, but that the best gifts of life are likely to pass her by. All of her ideals have been too high: she recognizes this sadly.

Yet she looks brightly across at him. Now she wants to do him full justice, to make amends for the scant measure she has dealt out to him. As a friend she can do this. Her sincerity is evident; it softens the firm lines in her face, and he, watching her in a diffident, neutral fashion, is rather doubtful, yet wholly delighted.

He does not plume himself on any conquest. It is enough just now to be on the simplest terms of friendship. He means to stretch it a long way, to make it cover a great many points.

"You will not mind my coming again?" he asks persuasively; "I promised Cynthia. And I miss them so much, all the friendly home interest and delight. I have been quite spoiled of late."

"Yes," she answers softly, glancing up utterly unconscious of the deeper meaning on his part.

In a vague, mysterious mood she goes to her room, wondering why this matter does not touch her more keenly as regards herself. She is not jealous, she is not stirred, not excited, neither does she feel to blame him for transferring his allegiance to another; she has simply put him out of her life, and he has at last comprehended the fact. There is a sacred kind of gladness that through all the long time when they knew nothing of each other he never wavered in his fancy. He was her loyal lover. Her sincere desire to accept the consequence of her own act keeps her from the consciousness of sacrifice; to her at present there is none. She cannot suffer over a love lost, for she has never given any. He has generously desired to shield her from the inconvenience of poverty — she can understand this now — it was because he fancied her so illy fitted to cope with it. An agony of scarlet drenches her face as she thinks of this low estimate; but she will meet bravely the consequences of her labored impression — it must have been that. Cynthia — how happy Cynthia will be! just the bright, eager sort of happiness that she enjoys. For a moment Regina Halford wishes — what? That she had made this late choice in the beginning, that she had not to retrace so many steps, to see so many dethroned, useless ideals, staring her in the face with their blind, dumb eyes.

Still, she is not the first who has lived out of and over grave mistakes. Youth is hers, health, opportunity. Indeed, she sees rare and golden ones if she has the courage to take them. Whatever has been best and truest in her desires seems to rise in her soul to-night like a high tide. Is it because she is glad of another's happiness? Is it because the true inspiration has reached her at last? She lies there in a strange, ineffable content, and when morning dawns she hardly knows whether she has slept or not.

Perdita is weak and miserable after her day of excitement. Regina reads to her a pretty, heart-breaking story, but she will have it — a story of sin and suffering, of repentance and final happiness. Not in so high a key that it is *above her comprehension*.

There has been a shower in the morning ; everything is clean and bright, and filled with wonderful fragrance. In the late afternoon Regina coaxes her out to drive, and it does brighten her. They pass several acquaintances who nod in a friendly fashion. Part of the town has gone out on its summering ; strangers have come in. Phaetons, dog-carts, and glittering buckboards bowl along the wide, shaded streets.

Oddly enough it is quite a prevalent whim to drive up to Bradley House. It is a rather picturesque ruin with its broken and blackened stone walls, that have defied wind and storm for so many years ; and now it is one of the old places with a story.

They go around by the post-office.

"Oh," says Perdita with a faint smile, "how natural it all seems ! Cynthia and I used to come down, you remember. Were you not lost when you gave up Dolly ? And — would you mind very much if you took me up to Bradley House some day ?"

"We will go any morning you like."

She cannot face the idle pleasure-seekers in the afternoon, and perhaps have Perdita pointed out as the heroine of a rather mysterious occurrence.

"Can you hold Dolly ?" Regina places the reins in her useless looking little hands.

Perdita laughs.

There is a letter from Cynthia. Another note in a bold, firm hand — why should it startle her ? She tears the end of the envelope. On a half sheet of business paper there are a few lines that beg her not to mention to Cynthia the prevailing sickness at Warwick ; he would be sorry to have the pilgrims needlessly alarmed.

Dr. Parker has stopped to speak to Perdita. A faint pink of pleasurable emotion has crept into the brown cheeks. Perdita looks like a foreigner with her unusual tints. She does not mind being stared at. Regina would shrink with sensitive pain ; she does as it is, but she nerves herself and keeps calm.

It is a full week before Winterburne ventures to repeat his call. Perdita is able to see company, indeed, is improving steadily. There are alternations of moods, but when she is most herself, she shrinks from the prospect of meeting her husband. Indeed, her romance is fast fading from its brilliant tints to gray ashes. She has an inner misgiving that its consequences will be more unpleasant than she has supposed. This clearer atmosphere defines matters more strictly. Regina softens, but she does not make futile compromises, her own experience has proved too bitter. Mrs. Halford comforts, but even she cannot disguise the fact that Perdita has thrown away the sweet liberty of her girlhood, the richness of a true, cherishing love for this wild, tumultuous passion. Jasper Bradley's name will always have attached to it some sort of stigma. He cannot be proved entirely innocent, Perdita knows, even if the actual crime is not fastened upon him. If she had been ignorant of it all, her imprudence would be a lighter burden. Still she is not forever snatching at her soul and drenching it in seas of remorse. She suffers acutely for a while, then her natural buoyancy asserts itself.

On this second visit of Winterburne's, which is made a family matter, Perdita quite surprises Regina by a certain aplomb that her experience of society has given her. She is entertaining in a bright, felicitous manner, even if it is superficial. Her pretty graces that she has learned to use for Jasper become her charmingly. Regina sits rather silent and amazed, as they toss bits of bright talk to and fro. It is elusive, hardly to be defined, cheery. Cynthia has this gift. After all, is it to be despised?

Norman Winterburne thinks not, as he drops the sorrows and cares and anxieties that beset his path. He is glad if she can be happy. Regina would be weighed down in the dust under this burden. As he listens, he watches the proud, beautiful girl. Oh, what save love can take her out in the open beyond, in the "sunshine calm and sweet!" If she would throw aside this restraining influence, and let *herself drift to a glad haven!* She has been making the

efforts of her life impersonal, yet it is not the large and sweet renunciation of self, the life in the midst of human wants and affections, the tender beneficence where the earthly and commoner duties subserve the divine. She has gone a little way—will she halt and grope about? Will she let some strong arm guide her hesitating steps? How is a man to cross over this wide ocean of uncertainty?

Perdita details her small enjoyments, her improvements, and some of her desires.

"I want a violin," she says in her soft yet insistent manner. "There are none to be had here, and I don't feel competent to judge. Do you know of any one?" she turns her small, dark face to Winterburne, and the eyes are alight with artistic fervor.

"It is too soon to begin. You are not strong enough," protests Regina in a throb of agonized humiliation.

"I get so weary of doing nothing." Her voice is pathetically sweet. "I read, but I can't go through your wise tomes, Regina. And I like verses—the kind that sing themselves. I'm not intellectual, I don't love to study. So when the rainy days come, I creep into bed and cry. I should feel so much better playing the violin in some corner. It is so sweet. It is a human voice talking to you, a sort of disembodied spirit that comes at your summons, and with it you go off to enchanted realms."

Her face is eager, shining, inspired. Winterburne has never seen her in such a glow of longing. Like Regina, he feels that the violin has played a rather fatal part in luring her to misfortune, and he should want never to hear the sound. But if it is her life!

"Why, yes," he says cheerfully. "And if I haven't a friend whose musical judgment I can trust, I know Armitage has. He was in all that wonderful musical and artistic circle in the city. Sometimes I wonder how he can throw himself heart and soul in the work over there," nodding southward. "He can make a larger mark in the world when he chooses. But I've been more than thankful to have him. Of course we will see about your violin."

"Oh, thank you a thousand times," Perdita cries joyfully.

After he has gone she twines her arms passionately about Regina's neck.

"Are you very angry?" she beseeches, as if she would disarm displeasure. "You see, I feel quite different about Mr. Winterburne — he was like a brother. He is so large and generous and restful; one could go to him in any stress, sure of comfort. And he doesn't mind. I think he likes to be asked for help and assistance. Re, I can't understand about your curious dislike;" and the straight brows are drawn together in perplexity.

"I — I don't dislike. I am not demonstrative," she replies weakly, excusingly.

"He will have to be the brother out of the Bradley ark of relationship for us. And we must all appreciate him," Perdita says with gentle gravity.

"Cynthia — likes him" — it seems wrested from Regina, a passionate admission to right herself.

"And he likes Cynthia. But there is some one who *loves* Cynthia. I have seen it." She nods her head confidently. "And — Re" — she presses the slowly yielding figure with sudden passion, while her voice falters through a prescient tremulousness.

Whatever secret trembles on the lips Regina kisses back again.

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CHAPTER XXVII

FOR HIS SAKE

Every young man has a fine season in his life when he will accept no office, and every young woman has the same when she will accept no husband. By and by they change and take one another in the bargain. — JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

PERDITA is delighted when a note comes to her announcing Winterburne's successful quest, and that he will deliver the precious article in safety on a certain evening. There has been a curious truce between her and Regina that brings about an unwonted gentleness on both sides. The weather has proved very trying — hot and moist with drenching showers, and scorching sunshine almost before the rain has ceased.

The evening comes, but it does not bring the promised visitor. Perdita waits impatiently after the trains come in, lingers on the porch, and ventures down the path. Mrs. Halford has a besetting fear that she may be spirited away.

"I do not think Jasper will ever want me again," she says reassuringly, yet with a certain sadness. She would rather stay here in a kind of joyous liberty, but one cannot put even the semblance of love underground without moments of regret.

"Something has happened!" she cries in a vehement fashion. "O Re, suppose he has been taken with the fever! Even if Mr. Armitage were, he would not leave him, only he would send word. And if he is alone there and ill! He is so good to everybody else! Why, *we* ought to go and care for him!"

Perdita is fertile in impossible methods that wear a practical semblance. Regina shudders. She has not considered the fever as any personal matter. It has been confined

among the poor, and once or twice almost stamped out. Indeed, he had not referred to it during his last call. But all this time he *has* been in danger and Armitage as well. She endeavors to be severely impartial. Indeed, as an admirer of Cynthia's he has a certain claim upon her attention. She tries to recall her sister's references to him. He has a high appreciation of her literary efforts, and is intensely proud of her success. They have certain affinities in this large work for humanity. But she cannot discern any point in which Winterburne suffers by contrast. He, too, gives of his manful strength and comprehensive abilities.

Regina Halford has a nervous, wakeful night. There is really nothing on her mind, she tells herself, unless it is the vague apprehension of the coming will contest. Oddly enough that seems to have settled into a firm belief that the first award of the law was just. She solaces herself with favorite poems; she tries to recall some fine points in a magazine article on one of the industrial problems of the day, but her mind does not obey its usual methodic guidance.

Towards morning there comes a beneficent suggestion of bracing autumnal weather. The air is crisp and clear, the murkiness and moisture have vanished. The sky is a brilliant blue to its farthest depths, the sun shines in magnificent splendor. Even a little fire does not come amiss in the breakfast-room.

Perdita is cross and cold. It will all be right when the world gets warmed up, no doubt; but she wants a shawl about her, and her chair close to the cheerful blaze on the hearth. She looks pinched and wan, and this morning is not pretty.

Regina goes out alone to attend to the daily wants of the household. It is quite the fashion in Beverly. Everybody comments upon the unusual fineness of the day until she meets Mr. Sayre hurrying along.

"Have you heard?"—he begins abruptly. "But you *could not*—there was, or might have been, a frightful acci-

dent last evening at Warwick station. I don't know the straight of it myself, but I am going down to see. There was the inevitable conjunction, — a special with railroad officials whizzing along, a train coming in, a drunken man, and Winterburne. Why he should have been in the *mêlée* — but he is everywhere," and he gives an irritated half pause.

"Not hurt — not" — Regina Halford seems stricken to stone. Who could fill the large place in the world if he went out of it?

"Well, not killed. First the word was that his leg was cut off, then his arm. The other fellow wouldn't have been much loss. You Bradleys seem to go naturally to the tragic side," he subjoins resentfully.

Regina stares with wide, terrified eyes.

"There's my train. I'll bring back the report. As if it wasn't enough for him to stay there in that fever-stricken hole!" Then he waves a formal adieu with his hand, and hurries down the street.

On Regina's return she finds Perdita thawed out, but in a rather fretful, wondering state because there is no note to explain. She simply cannot talk over the matter, but fills every moment with duties, and then takes up a difficult piano exercise.

"If I only had my violin!" bewails Perdita. "We could play duets, as you and Jasper used."

It is only by a supreme effort of will that Regina goes on unheeding the small creature beside her, whose careless words have a keen, wasp-like sting. Why does all the old life, the past summer, rise up like a flood-tide and threaten to engulf her as she wanders on a mysterious shore, stricken with a nameless terror, impelled forward, yet clinging to the very weeds and *débris* that give her no foothold and alike slip through her hands? She knows the crisis of her life has come upon her and found her with only a few ineffectual weapons to ward it off. That she will not succeed comes to her in a vague, penetrative consciousness that envelops her like a midnight cloud in which she can only peep blindly.

At noon Mr. Sayre's office-boy appears with a laconic note. It is directed to Miss Halford, and she is at the door to receive it.

"Arm broken. Have brought him home with me."

A great flood of thankfulness surges over her. He will not die, he will not be maimed. Now she can go her way enfranchised from this awesome terror that has grasped her very soul. She draws a long, triumphant breath. She can explain—it will be much less awkward than when he comes. She wants no secret of his to hamper her.

"What is it?" asks Perdita, who has seen the boy from her window up-stairs. "Not"—

"Not Jasper. Oh, no." How suddenly tranquil she is! "I will tell you why you did not get your violin. Come to mother," and she leads the way, briefly repeating her small adventure of the morning, and handing the note to impatient Perdita, who asks a dozen questions in a breath.

"We shall hear how it happened," she says in an arid, almost impatient tone. "Conjecture is useless."

"And he might have been killed! Regina, *do* you care for anybody?" Perdita stamps her small foot upon the floor. "Will he come, do you think? Or ought we to go to the Sayres'?"

"A broken arm does not prevent journeying about," she says tremulously.

He will come soon enough for her. She would like to delay it indefinitely. What it will be she does not formulate even in her thoughts; neither does she ask herself any questions. She seems to have passed beyond the inward control so certain heretofore; she can only stand in that awesome, breathless mood.

To Perdita never were moments so leaden. She is excited to the uttermost. She puts on a gown, then dislikes herself and changes it for another. She gathers great clusters of flowers and thrusts them in her belt; she *hovers about like a restless bird*. It might be her lover, *Regina thinks in dismay*. She sits in her room in yester-

day's white gown, with no ornament, not even a flower, at her throat. And it seems the merest space of time when she hears an exclamation, her own name called, and a step on the flags below. She looks down with a swift shiver in her blood, her pulses throb, she can feel the scarlet heat in her cheek. If she might fly to the ends of the earth! It appears in that instant as if flight were her only resource. How can she meet him?

His step is not so strong and imperious, there is a new languor in his face which has been robbed of its brilliant coloring. His left arm is in a sling. As he turns toward the porch she catches the direction of the intent, searching eyes. Perdita, with a child's eagerness, runs down the steps to meet him. She hears her mother's gentle tone through the wide open door, and then goes slowly, the white wraith following behind, like quivering billows. She steps out blindly. He has both hands in the one of his—did she give them—did he take them?—All is confusion as if she were miles deep in the sea, and the waves chanting their murmurous diapason over her.

"No," he is saying in answer to Perdita, "I am not very much of a hero, though I shall come in for some newspaper glory, I dare say. It was only a little presence of mind and a strong arm. A moment later it would have been all over with the poor fellow! He was crazed with grief. He had that morning buried the second child in a month. I suppose he thought drinking the only remedy for his anguish,—what did the poor wife do at home to assuage hers? And he was blindly, shamefully drunk—that is the terrible factor in it. I was carrying your precious violin, Perdita"—he glances over at her, still holding in his the hands that were ice cold a moment since, and are now throbbing in great pulses of fire. "No one was thinking of the special, at least, not among the bystanders. Braxton staggered on the track, there was a whiz and a *blinding* flare of light and a cry from half a dozen throats, and somehow we rolled over together, outside the track, *that was enough.* It was Braxton falling on me that broke

my arm and wrenched my shoulder. The only thing really bruised and mangled and ground to powder was your pretty violin asleep in its case, Perdita; and there are others in the world. If you want to cry at all, you must weep over that poor little martyr."

Still holding one hand, he leads Regina to the willow chair laced with soft red ribbons, and takes the seat beside her. He has impelled her to meet him on his own ground, he has not reached up to her prideful remoteness. She has flushed and throbbed, and sits downcast and trembling. He is not the suppliant but the master.

"You are very pale," Mrs. Halford says alarmed. "Will you have a glass of water?"

For a brief instant he has the sensation of fainting. The joy of his victory has well-nigh overcome him.

"No," he says with a long, quivering breath. He cannot send the two away. And if he could—he is too merciful to put her to any deeper strain.

"A man gets a little shaken up under such circumstances. I didn't sleep at all—of course, I didn't go home. A good Samaritan took me in, and"—he laughs softly, more from that tremendous overflow of emotion than any sense of amusement—"bound up my wounds and comforted me generally; but I don't know as any money passed in the transaction," and there is a gleam of humor in his deep, luminous eyes. "Then this morning, who should come to hand but Mr. Sayre, and he insisted on bringing me home and making much of me. He believes he has a mortgage on me until the 10th of September."

"But you look so very tired, so exhausted." All Mrs. Halford's motherly instincts are aroused. "Perhaps it would be more comfortable for you to lie on the sofa in the parlor?"

"I have been 'cuddled'—isn't that the word?" and he smiles over at Perdita. "Mrs. Sayre is enchanting. In fact, she would hardly allow me to come out. I am under *marching orders* for nine o'clock sharp."

Perdita gives a long, sighing breath. The story has not

been sufficiently explicit. She can think of twenty points that need elaborating, and she plies him with eager questions. There is a charm in his simplicity, in his touches of exaggerative humor, that wards off the danger and the pathos, that keeps the episode to the strong, friendly commonplace. All the same, Regina Halford knows that two lives have come very near a fatal termination, and she wonders if the worthless one could ever counterbalance the other, even in God's sight. For now she is quite ready to give that other its full due. She is passionately eager to confess her sins, to make all honorable amends, to go her way.

Mrs. Halford presently goes in to see about the supper, though Martha is in every respect efficient. Perdita's flowers begin to wither, and she saunters among the garden beds. There is an open space at the south side, a driveway with a border of hardy, old-fashioned plants, and she is presently lost to sight. The vines are between them and the outside world. Winterburne leans over until his breath makes a summer air upon her cheek, turning it scarlet. He sees the rise and fall of the throbbing, tumultuous heart, and he knows, by the divine assurance given in such moments, that its beating pulsation is quite at his mercy.

"Regina," it is the faintest whisper.

"Oh, do not, do not!" she entreats pitifully.

He carries her hand to his lips in a transport, then, as she makes an unmistakable movement of flight, his right arm restrains, her head droops, the soft heat of the scarlet cheek kindles the daring of manhood's ardent love, and he has possessed himself of her dewy, tremulous lips, set his seal of an inalienable right.

There are two birds answering each other from leafy coverts, a murmur in the leaves, a mysterious sweetness in the air. Ah, if she dared go and dwell in that enchanted country!

It is but a moment before Perdita's dress flutters back again. They are in the old world, but all has changed

She rises then and he lets her go; he cannot be cruel when he has won so much.

Regina flies to her own room, and clasping her hands over her face, hides both on the friendly pillow, not resisting, but letting the current sweep over her. He has invaded her whole being with his potent personality. Try as she may, she cannot reassume that central self-possession, from behind which she had defended herself.

He has yielded to the persuasions of Mr. Sayre and the insistence of Armitage, and promised to spend a few days away from business and the sorrowful work that has pressed so heavily upon them. The cases of fever and other summer troubles are abating. Only a few are seriously ill. Old Mr. Farrand's life is drawing to a close, and the young clergyman is now his steadfast friend. But when that is over he means to send him to the seaside to join Alice and Cynthia, who are to be kept there for some time yet, until cleanliness, science, and the cooler weather have restored Warwick to a state of safety.

The supper is a cheerful meal, even if Regina is silent. She does not abound in light and merry small talk, even at the best of times. Afterward, he insists that they shall go for a walk, the evening is so fine. Since he must be in bed early, he cannot be defrauded of everything, he declares protestingly.

There is a young crescent moon hanging goldenly against the blue, and stars are studded thick. But they walk under the trees amid the songs of the night, at first in sweet, awesome silence. He thinks it enough to have her here, half-won. He could go on forever, but he knows the strenuous nature is not at peace even with itself.

"But you love me," he says exultantly, as if half to himself. "At last you love me! You cannot deny me now."

"I must tell you"—her voice is faint and wandering like the night wind. "You have mistaken me. I am not as you think. I cannot let you deceive yourself. And *there is Cynthia*," she *will* say it. "She is better, nobler,

she has steadfast purposes, she has the power of doing. And I — I dream — I have dreamed of myself only. I have been narrow, grudging, unjust, cowardly. Your life is so infinitely larger, better, and nobler than I would admit at first — a larger woman must be set in it. I cannot, I cannot!"

Her tone pierces him with a delicious pain. He is too generous to desire to humble her.

"I have always loved you," he says. "Back in that old time, do you remember? And I have gone astray as well. Even then I wanted to set you in the 'large room.' You were so stately and fair, you secretly fretted against your limitations, I saw that. I meant to be rich for your sake. And if all women could inspire men with that larger ideal, there would be less want and misery and wretched living. There is a great deal of romancing, but a life of poverty is hard beyond compare. I wonder that women venture in it! They are noble and generous to a fault."

"I was not that noble. And you must know, — it came to a bitter pass with us, and I thought — yes, I really considered whether I could not shelter me and mine beneath your kindness, whether I could not take all and give back just a little" — Her voice sharpens with the consciousness of bitter shame.

"You thought — even then" — He draws a long breath. "Regina, you could not have lived with a man who loved you and not have loved him in return. You are too honest. And oh, my darling! if you had made one little sign!"

"It was not love," she cries with sharp assertiveness.

"But — you liked me."

"I liked you. But I was weak and narrow. I looked at your life, not at you. I had plans, ambitions. I thought I could reach great heights. I have done — nothing," she confesses despairingly.

"My child," he says caressingly, "it is something to arrive at that knowledge even. But you have been laboring at the wrong things. See, you have come back to the need of all womanly lives — love. You have a sweet, and

noble, and gracious womanhood. It can be put to better uses than scrubbing floors. Why should you not have had ambitions! And see, Regina, how blind, how even cowardly I was a year ago. I offered you the wealth you had been deprived of then. I should have made a fight for love pure and simple. I should have discerned the royal road to your heart."

"You thought I hated poverty! Yes, I did. I shall never love its straits and sacrifices and small economies. But I could take them up unflinchingly now. I have acquired some wisdom, some of the truer grace."

"My darling," he says with infinite sweetness, "there are flowers that can only reach their best in hothouses with care, and shelter, and tenderness. We prate of the little wood violet with no sweetness, but we take to our inmost souls her beautiful, fragrant sister, evolved with much pains and delicate care, who gives a grateful reward for it all. Is it weak to appreciate all the finer grace that ease, and culture, and wealth can give? If it is a man's birthright to be strong, to wrest from the earth her treasures, cannot some women comprehend in their natures the glow and sparkle of the diamond that he is proud to put in a rare setting?"

"But you — yes, you rate me *too* highly," she replies in her strenuous insistence. "I have not been honest. I think now that I sheltered myself behind Jasper Bradley lest you might come too near. I was afraid" —

"Ah, you half loved me then. You see, a man blunders as well. Why, *I* was too fearful."

"He asked me to marry him."

Winterburne gives his soft, delightful laugh.

"And you could not. At first I was troubled, perhaps jealous, afraid lest he represented to you some needs of your soul of which I was ignorant. Then I felt certain you would see."

"When I found some of these most exquisite qualities had no root, no real growth, I could not help applying the *test to myself*. And I discovered that mine had no large

and vital grace, none of that broad comprehension. I was ashamed of the indigence of my own soul. Cynthia is a better, a more courageous woman."

"But it is *you* I love. See," he says, "I once offered to give up some of my plans and aims for your sake. Now, I ask you to come and help me wherever you can. Then I would have set you up on a pedestal and worshipped you; now I say let us worship together the one true God, and serve Him in whatever we may best do for humanity. Ten years from this time I shall be a comparatively rich man. Can you not add such delight to the uses of wealth that others shall not so much envy but be glad that we had it?"

"You think I can help you" — she falters.

He stops and kisses her protesting, questioning lips under the silence of the eternal stars.

"My dear Regina, you want to take life too hard. You want to do penance for all your poor little sins and mistakes. Humanity is making them continually. A wise man said, 'Let the dead bury their dead.' Let the old mistakes go with the past. There will be enough in the new life without wresting these from their graves. I am no hero. I dare say I shall try your patience often. Come, now having confessed so many things, make one more sweet confession. Tell me that you love me. You have not said it yet."

"I — I do not know," she cries piteously, and yet she clings to him with a new tenderness. "It is all so strange. And I have not a quick, responsive nature" —

"You have been among your gods of stone, up in your serene heaven, questioning the stars for so long, that you have almost forgotten human needs. And I am very human. If last night, and there was one dread instant, — I had gone out of life" —

"Oh, I cannot bear it!" she cries. "If you *had* gone, — I should have been true always to the one man who loved me;" and she lets herself be borne on by a sudden rush of sweet, new emotion that fills her soul with mysterious pain.

"Will you be less tender to the living man who loves you?" he asks with infinite entreaty.

"Oh, are you quite sure? If there were some nobler woman?" For she has an awful misgiving that she is defrauding Cynthia.

"You are set in a circle of scruples," he says, amused and yet a little hurt. "I told you once I was your loyal lover. I shall remain so to my life's end. Whether you take me or put me by, there will be no other woman."

Cynthia has divined this with her clear insight. *They* will always be comrades on parallel lines.

"Forgive me," she entreats. Then, while her face is scarlet in the dusk where even the stars may not see, she cries with one impassioned breath, "I take you."

But he can divine by some sure intuition that even the stars may not see, that love flings out its flag of surrender.

Neither does Regina Halford sleep this night. She ceases to protest, she is simply passive. The happiness is so new that she feels there should be some process of training her soul to apprehend its sacredness. She is so ignorant, so uncomprehending. All her old ideals have been swept away, and the new are formless but not void.

Winterburne has one delightfully indolent day. Mrs. Sayre comes and takes out Perdita, Mrs. Halford retires to her own room and dozes. The story tells itself by the indescribable mystery hovering about Regina, who cannot dress her bliss in common words.

On the following morning he goes down to Warwick. Mr. Farrand is dead. His almost half-century of service is ended. There will be an infusion of fresh, younger life presently and newer methods. For the rest, the town looks greatly improved. There are plans for new houses, for straightening the streets, and certain sanitary regulations that should have been enforced long ago. Now that death has entered many homes, and there have been weeks of such terrible anxiety and anguish, people are quite ready to listen.

Winterburne insists that Armitage shall take his vacation. He is *very much* worn, but has manfully done his duty. He is *delighted* with the prospect of joining the two women

who have made life larger to him in the rich companionship of mutual experience. He has acquired a more intelligent perception of the need of human souls, through this year's experience.

The hearing of the will is postponed twice to give Jasper Bradley an opportunity to appear. His lawyer has sent repeatedly to the address given, only to learn at last that the person in question had disappeared, leaving no clew, and he is rather disgusted at the prospect of losing a large fee. The evidence is sufficient, though it is known there is some other quite as convincing. The court declares the will invalid, and orders the former division to be made. There are just two shares. But Perdita is not seriously concerned. She has her beloved violin, and dreams in secret of some day trying her chances with the great world. When they are all married, they will not care so much.

The trial has been sufficient excuse for Winterburne to spend some weeks in Beverly, even if a change were not necessary. He comes up every night. Oh, how lovely the old town is in its immeasurable quiet! Perhaps he will not wait until extreme old age to settle here. He has a fancy there may be two homes. Indeed, he plans one a little different from his first dream, to be sure, with large grounds and commodious rooms where some of the lessons of social equality may be taught in a kindly fashion.

There is a noticeable falling-off in the saloons. Men are beginning to be interested in other projects. Braxton, too, is not without influence among his compeers, obstinate old-country people, but not lacking in a certain kind of shrewdness. His escape from a terrible death sobered him completely; and the knowledge that his employer, the youngest and most fortunate of the three partners, should have risked his life, touched all his springs of gratitude.

The Braxtons had indeed suffered severely. Of the nine children the baby, a pretty, flaxen-haired little thing, had gone first. This had been followed by several weeks' illness on the part of the mother, when the eldest son, a fine, sturdy lad of a dozen years, sickened and died. Through it all, the

man had gone to his beer for comfort, now and then indulging in stronger potations, as had been the case on this unfortunate evening. A kind of horror seized upon the small community. The incident preached its own sermon.

Among the men it has a curious, pervasive influence, from the fact that a man like Winterburne should not hesitate in such a moment of peril. He simply followed the first impulse of humanity, but the broken arm is a badge of honor that points it. And as the men see it carried in a sling, and take his cheery greeting, they are more disposed to listen to his counsel. In fact, it has awakened a new effort in behalf of the abolishment of all liquor-selling in the town, and one can forecast on which side the majority will range themselves at the next election. They enjoy the fact that Winterburne has regained his lost possessions, though his vein of iron seems practically inexhaustible.

Cynthia comes home bright and fresh from her sojourn. She has met some old friends, she has made some new ones, and she has also found that her powers predicate lasting results, and are not a mere brilliant flash. She has a society air that quite surprises Regina.

"I've toned down," she declares with her good-humored gayety. "I am not quite such a radical, and do not consider society such a bore, or even a frivolous waste of time. One can be grand, and honest, and gentle under all circumstances; and the beautiful, refined ways, the repression of arrogance and selfish rudeness, frame in certain people until they affect you like a charming picture. It isn't insincere either. There is a good deal of beautiful truth as well as that of an unpleasant quality. Why can we not make more of it attractive?"

Regina seems mysteriously beautiful. Cynthia studies her in vague astonishment.

Winterburne has been spending his afternoon with Alice, who is cheerful and tender and restored in health, but amazed at the havoc disease has made in the town, as its *worst* has been scrupulously withheld from them. Armitage has not cared to dim his holiday with the sad details. Nor-

man has to confess how he came by his broken arm, but he does it so lightly that Alice hardly realizes until she hears Mrs. Prall's version. Indeed, that worthy has kept a kind of journal in her slow, methodical brain, and by degrees every day's doings come to hand.

In the early twilight Winterburne goes up to Beverly. The evenings are rather cool, and they are assembled in the cosey parlor, listening to Cynthia, when the step is heard on the porch. Regina, in her trailing white gown, goes out to meet him. She is not quite at home in her new happiness. It has disturbed all the springs of her nature too deeply. The rather strained susceptibility of her conscience both touches and amuses her lover. The only point on which he is tremendously exigent is that she shall love him, and he quotes Carlyle to prove "that man's appetite for sweet victual is enormous."

She returns with him, though he takes a seat by Cynthia's side. There is a great exultation in his eyes that she has never seen before, even in his most intense moments. Is his voice richer? Cynthia studies the grave, beautiful girl a moment. If there is one sharp pang, it is not envy. She has her gift, her capacity for enjoyment, and a love offered in adoring eyes, in mute, delicate revelations, that will take no more definite shape until she is ready for it. Odd and unexpected as it was for her to blossom out into a genius, it seems still more surprising to take a place in the world as a clergyman's wife.

He, too, has certain literary gifts. They can assist each other materially. If she should come to love where she admires and respects so much — and she will still have her friend and brother. She can rejoice heartily in his happiness.

"O Re," she says that night, "don't trust Winterburne to keep your secrets. He is like the lover in Miss Mulock's poem, he almost 'goes in and out with a shout.'"

"I wonder," Regina begins with an unfathomable softness wrenching her heart a little, "if you could not have loved him, Cynthia? You are" —

"Oh, you foolish girl!" but she is keenly touched with the large thought, unlike the exclusive Regina. "Why, it would be a wicked waste of material! I have so many pungent, effervescing properties, that we two would keep the world on a continual bubble. And he loves *you*, he always has. It has taken you all this time to find it out" —

"No," she cries insistently. "Let me be honest. I knew it."

"Then add another honesty. Be thankful. Do you suppose if a man like that had loved me all these years I would have wasted my life, and his too, getting ready?" and she laughs teasingly. Then she comes and kisses her. "O Re, *let* yourself be happy. It is the sweetest thing in all the wide world!"

They decide among themselves that Bradley House will not be rebuilt. It has served its purpose, it has had its story, so let it go and the tragedy die out; the memory of Morton Bradley as well. It has played a curious part in all their lives. But they have more important duties than nursing up old traditions not especially notable for any of the heroic virtues.

It is October before Cynthia opens her school. Jenny Braxton will be trained for her successor, and other monitors may be found. Cynthia feels herself peculiarly identified with its prosperity and its purposes. And — is there something else?

"So," Dale begins one morning, "your young parson has had a fine call, I hear! That's always the way. Just as they have an improvement fairly on its legs they start off, and the poor thing topples over and takes to creeping again. But one can't blame him;" and the man gives a sort of consoling snort.

"He is not going away!" returns Winterburne.

"What — double a salary and position and appreciation, and a pretty city to live in? Well, he has done a good work here. He deserves it."

"Dale," begins Winterburne, in his persuasive tone,

"why not take hold and help us? You have a kindly heart. You're not half the selfish fellow you try to be. I noticed that you went to the meetings regularly last winter. And you were generous not to consider the cut in wages proposed a month ago — I've never thanked you for it, I've been so full of everything, and a broken arm beside. It was rather ungrateful."

Dale drops down on a pile of iron "pigs," and crosses one leg over, in a deliberate fashion he has, as if he had settled for all day.

"See here, Winterburne," he begins, while his grayish face flushes, "I went over that matter something in your fashion. Prices had dropped a little, to be sure. I counted what it would be to us — a sum not to be despised by a man who has turned the half century, and longs for a competency. Then I counted on the other side. Gad! I never was so struck in my life! If we'd lowered wages to the scale proposed, we'd made a clear profit. We should have grown absolutely richer, and those poor fellows, with their doctors' bills, and funerals, and lost time — well, they would have grown poorer, of course. So you see, I've solved a big problem! It isn't always so, I know, but on our side we plan to lose as little as possible. They can't help themselves. Some one said at one of the meetings that as soon as a poor man tried to get a house of his own, the screws were put on! I felt, too, we'd have to fight you, and you are a big fellow with an iron mine back of him!"

Dale screws up his face in what is meant for a laugh, and surveys the fine, compact figure. He has grown tremendously proud of Winterburne, though he rails at him, and they came almost to a quarrel about his pulling Braxton from under the cars.

Winterburne grasps the other's hand with such force it almost unseats him. It is such a strong, cheery, magnetic clasp.

"I'm one fellow out of five thousand," he says with emotion. "Good fortune has toppled down on me, but

even when I went to school I couldn't go off by myself and eat a delicious apple while a little chap stood by hungry-eyed. I can't now. And life isn't over-long" —

"That's just it. And how it's going to look on the other side! Gad! I think most of us don't believe there is any other side! For if we really were convinced that we had to meet the 'deeds done in the body' — well, I'm thinking there'd be a shamefaced lot of us. Here I've been a church-member thirty odd years! And I think I never 'got religion,' as people say, until two months ago; that is, the kind that takes the Golden Rule into account. And if Armitage stays, you may look for me down there. And see here, why don't you build your city up to Cedar Grove? You'd have lots of beauty as God made it, and the river with a sort of Jordany look opposite, plenty of room, and sweet, wholesome air. We generally toss up and give the poor people the ugliness."

Then Dale blows his nose tremendously, and, springing up, hurries off urgently.

It is worth thinking of. A man with a mine back of him can afford to help build a town. He can place Regina there; ah, that will be the connecting link, and the sweet, strenuous soul can find her work and service.

If it were not for Armitage there might be lonely evenings out at the cottage. Alice must needs be content, since he is so blissfully happy. But Cynthia will be the sister of her heart, the sharer of her pursuits.

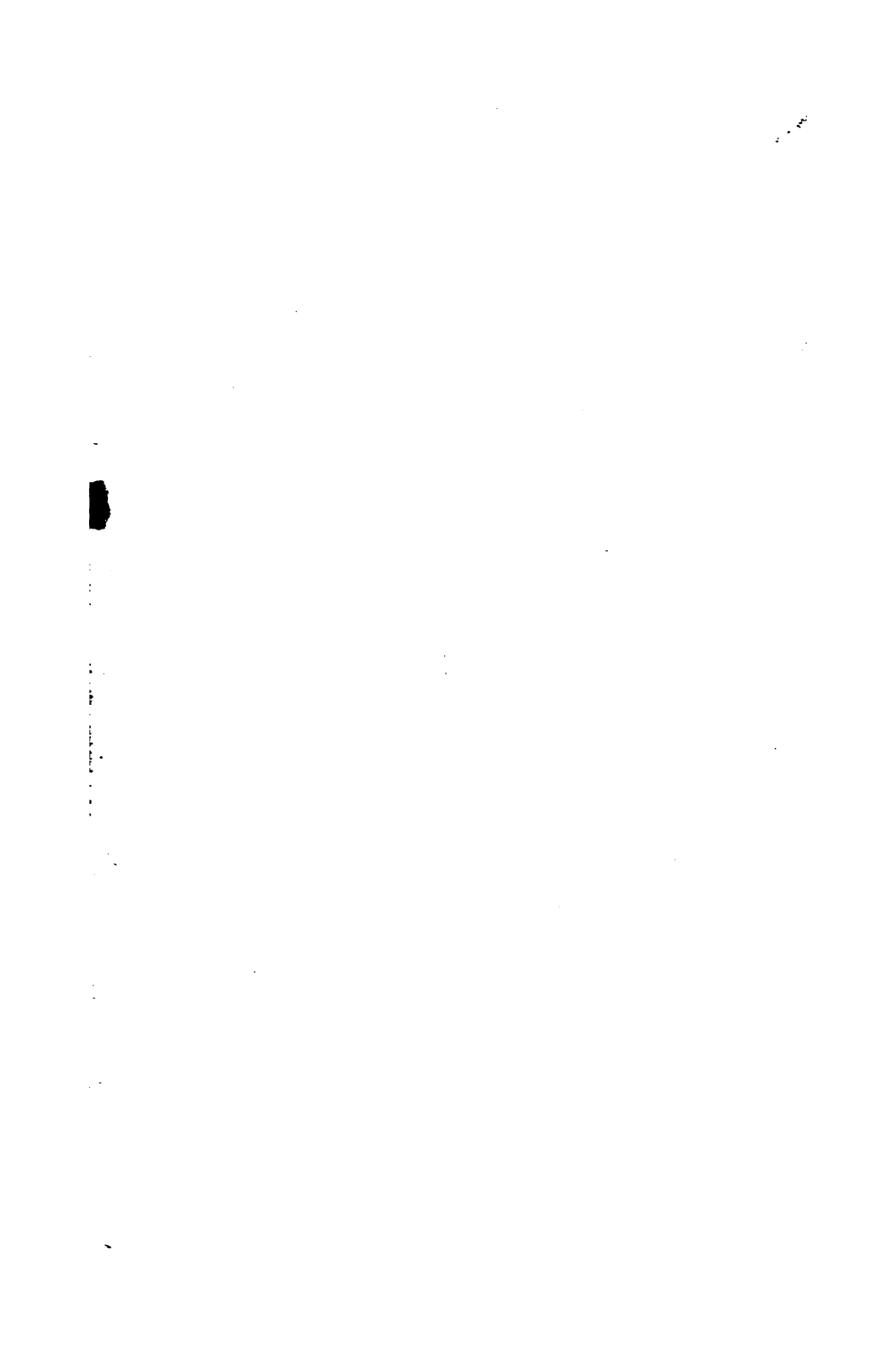
"I begin to think," says Regina, as she goes out on the porch and greets his coming, "that no one really wants me but just you."

"And you?" he asks, with a lover's exultant yet solemn sweetness.

The shining stars, that have never wearied of lovers since the first two questioned each other, harvest and hold the answer.







JUN 19 1941

